The Home Front*

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In the back yard of the lodging house, in the top of a dead tree, glib blackbirds swung in the wind on their individual twigs. Now and again, at some signal, they dropped to the ground but presently returned in a flutter of wings. Then the fancy would strike them to clear the tree, every man jack of them and off they would go like a whole company of hysterical busybodies. All the while they were fussing, big silver gulls sailed at their ease, high above them, descending occasionally to sit on the edge of a moored fishing boat which slowly turned round and round at the head of the little harbor. Some of the gulls set out to sea, as straight and sure in their flight as though a great hand carried them out beyond the causeway to the Sound. A savage sunset ignited the windows of defense plants across the water, caused derelict heaps of rubbish to glitter blindingly, smote the khaki wings of helicopters which all day long gyrated over the dishevelled land.

Although it was late in April and the day had been warm, the room was chilly and the stout doctor, shivering, drew the heavy Paisley shawl closer about his shoulders, sighed, and settled more firmly into the rocking chair by the window. Steadfastly he stared out. It would be self-indulgent to turn away in displeasure from all the symbols he read in his prospect, unprofitable to admit the instruction of homesickness or vexation. (He had, of necessity, come to this twilight discipline; in days past he had been so imprudent in his revery that he had often lost all perspective and had thought of the war as a deliberate insult to himself.) And, indeed, it was not so much sad or vexing as it was puzzling that he, a homeless man, citizen of a distant country, was willy nilly a part of the "home front," sharing richly in the spoils. As he followed the ascent of a helicopter, he marvelled as frequently he did at the wonderful aptness of the phrase, "the home front." Here people lived as headily and impermanently as soldiers on battlefields. There seemed to be no natives unless the babies born here during this long pause could be called such. No indigenous architecture was visible. Probably it existed but it was hidden away behind blocks of temporary structures, by barrack-

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like apartment houses, sprawling into the yards of churches, huddling in the sulphurous shadows of factories. And although everything was new, made freshly for this especial period in the world's history, it had a second-hand look. Houses, oil drums, busses, people seemed to have been got at a fire sale.

There was a perpetual stirring in the lodging house. All the other tenants were defense workers, and the walls of the corridors were hung with warning pennants: "QUIET! BULLARD WORKER! HELP HIM HELP WIN THE WAR!" At the most unseemly hours —eleven at night, four in the morning—alarm clocks shrieked, taps gushed, feet crunched over the gravel of the driveway to the never ending stream of busses. The lodgers ranged from late adolescence to early senility and they came from all over the country, from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Pueblo, Colorado; Mobile; Galveston; Wilmington, Delaware. They lived three to a room and six to a bathroom and because there were so many of them and their existence was so migratory, it was impossible to tell them apart, to give them more specific designations than "old" and "young," "male" and "female." Dr. Pakheiser from time to time received bits of information about them from the Hungarian manageress, Mrs. Horvath. She tossed them to him, dry and meatless, and did so without the least good humor. On the first floor there was (or had been) a Sikorsky worker who owned a fishing boat and on Sundays went to the Sound for bass. A lady accountant at Remington Arms had left her electric grill on for six hours and the pan that had been on it melted down to nothing, creating a fearful stink. A foreman at the Bunner Ritter plant had been rejected by the army for ulcers of the stomach. A girl at Chance Vought had, returning from a week-end in Massachusetts, seen a trainload of prisoners of war passing through the station in Providence and she had reported that they grinned shamelessly as if they were on a holiday. But the doctor did not know whether these adventures belonged to current tenants or to former ones, and if he had inquired further and had correctly assigned the histories to the right names and faces, it would have served no purpose; by the time he was sure of his ground, they would have packed up their suitcases and moved away and immediately been replaced.

He was sympathetic with their restlessness but sternly held himself detached from it. Had he not done so, he, too, probably would have wandered from one boarding house to the next like a sick person constantly shifting about in his bed trying to find a comfortable position for his aching bones. Refusing to think of himself as a "transient," pretending that there would never be an end to the war or to

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this exile, he had put up with the chilliness of the house, the unpleasant manner of the manageress, the excessive rent, and had furthermore doggedly transformed the room into *his* room as if he were going to live in it the rest of his life. It was the first time in his three years of residence in America that he had accomplished the transformation, and it had not been easy. In former rooms, though, it had been impossible. This was like one in a hotel which defied any eccentric impress, and in the beginning, he had almost despaired, had been convinced that like all the others, it would remain inviolably and complacently itself and that when he finally went away, if his signature were there at all, it would be nothing more characteristic of him than of the tenants before him or the ones to follow: a half used box of toothpowder and a rusted razor blade in the medicine chest, or on the desk a bottle of ink or a glass ashtray bought for a dime. There was, upon everything, the mark of an absolute and wholly impersonal vulgarity. The furniture was mongrel. The walls were cream-colored plaster which could offend no one; fastened to them here and there were besilvered lamps containing bulbs shaped like fat candleflames which shed a pale and genteel light. The rugs were scrupulously unobtrusive. The sturdy column of the standing lamp was embellished with twists of iron which represented nothing on earth, and the shade, seemingly designed to diminish illumination by exactly half, was silk of a color that could not be named, a color like one acquired by an amateur chemist or by a child experimenting with crayons. The ample bed (too ample for his understanding. It was called a "three-quarter" bed and he wondered whether it was meant for two children or for someone prodigiously obese) was covered with a faded counterpane made of two Indian prints sewn together.

But the room had its virtues. The rocking chair was comfortable, the table was steady, and there were plenty of clothes hangers in the closet. And Mrs. Horvath kept everything clean. Aside from the fireplace which he had been requested not to use, and the only mirror which was hopelessly defective, and the writing desk which had a limping leg, everything was in "good working order."

The exterior of the house was equally non-committal. It was large, shapeless and built of yellow stone. It stood behind a high brick wall, its back windows overlooking an arm of the sea which, at low tide, was a black and stinking mud-flat. A dump had been made at the end of the water and here was heaped all the frightful refuse of the city, the high-heeled shoes and the rotten carrots and the abused insides of automobiles; when the wind blew, the odor from the dump was so putrid in so individual a way that it was quite impossible to

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describe. But on a clear day, the doctor could look the other way and see, far off, the live blue Sound and the silhouettes of white sail boats and grey battleships. And while the plants, their windows ghastly blue all night, their noises constant every hour of every day, were almost within a stone's throw of his window, he at least had the illusion of being in the country. For the lawns in front and in back were healthy, the trees were abundant, and forsythia was blooming now along the wall. He had pondered often in the year he had lived here why so expensive a house (for clearly it was that; its plate glass and the intricate furbelows of its façade testified to suddenly acquired money) had been built on so unprepossessing a site, and at last he learned from a taxi-driver that the original owner had been a rum-runner who had brought his boats up the narrow neck of water and had unloaded them at the cottage in the back yard where now the Horvath family lived. While he was unable to find more than a humorous token in it, he thought with certain pleasure of the interview in which the house changed hands and became the property of the present landlord, a Roman Catholic priest.

Sometimes, too, he wondered how the bootlegger would regard the changes he had made in his room, a room which perhaps had formerly been the office for the transaction of his illegal business. And how, for that matter, the priest did when he came on his monthly tour of inspection. Very likely both of them would find it prissy and impractical. He had taken down the pictures he found there: a tinted photograph of the Grand Canyon (which he thought must be the most dreadful sight in the world), a subdued study of an English cottage and one of a vase of asters. In their place he had hung a print of "The Siege of Toledo" and one of "The Fall of Icarus" and a photograph of the bridge in Würzburg. On top of the bookcase were three decanters, for Kümmel, brandy and dubonnet, a little white pot of philodendron, and a pewter tray on which stood two heavy wine glasses and a curious pipe. In the shelves were the few books he had brought with him from Ludwigshaven: Dante, Rilke, Plato, some medical books, *Buddenbrooks, Crime and Punishment, The Charterhouse of Parma,* and those he had bought here, in the hope, never realized, of learning to read English easily. Those were *For Whom the Bell Tolls, The Late George Apley, The Golden Treasury* and *The Story of San Michele.* A cuckoo clock hung on the wall over the bed and on the bureau a large wooden nutcracker lay amongst big pecans in a polished lemonwood bowl. On the bedside table were an ashtray he had bought in Milan, a brown earthenware carafe, a diary bound in green leather, and a little silver letter opener.

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When, at nightfall, he drew the window-blinds against industrial America, it was not hard to imagine himself in his student room at Heidelberg. He had never been rich enough to eat at the town restaurants and he had disliked the tepid white food at the Mensa of the University, and so he had made little suppers for himself at his desk. And while now he was quite able to afford four-course dinners (the dearth of doctors for civilians had contrived for him a flourishing and gainful practice amongst Hungarian defense workers and their pregnant wives) he preferred to remain in his room and eat the sort of food he had done when he was a young man. Upon the table he would place the parcels he had brought from the delicatessen; a little sausage and a loaf of bread, a bottle of pickled tomatoes, a carton of Schmierkäse, perhaps a jar of marinated herring. Then, his meal ready, he would pour himself a glass of dubonnet, light an Egyptian Prettiest cigarette and sit for a while in the chair by the window, staring now at the dark green blind which was punctured here and there, admitting star-like bits of light.

During the day, Dr. Pakheiser smoked American cigarettes, but he had found that nothing so completely and happily restored his student days to him as the smell of Oriental tobacco, and because he was so busy until he left his office, he could not afford time for the nostalgic meditations it inevitably brought. Closing his eyes, he would fancy himself twenty years younger, not yet fat, but even now near-sighted, eating ham and bread and drinking *Rotwein* in the narrow room of Frau Jost's flat. Frau Jost was a pretty, friendly young widow about whom he sometimes had romantic daydreams, and she had a daughter of four, a jolly little girl named Greta. Every morning, as Alfred left the house, Greta came to wish him good bye. She clutched in her arms a black cat who wore a red ribbon about its neck. And as he ran down the stairs, she always said, "Please look up at the window, Herr Pakheiser, and I will wave." Outside, in the steep street, he had to hold his head far back so that he could see the top window, and there she was, on time and faithful every day, to wave her hand and smile at him, still holding her cat.

Although those years at Heidelberg had been rich and full of importance, it was little Greta Jost that the flavor of the cigarette brought back most clearly. While he had had friends with whom he played chess at Burkhardt's *conditorei* and had drunk with on Saturday nights at the Vater Rhein and while he had even occasionally had a girl, it was his daily encounter with the child that seemed now to fix the days of the past. He had been, even then, a person of strict habit. Once Greta had had chicken-pox and for a week had not ap-

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peared at the window, and all that time Alfred had been somewhat inattentive to his lectures and had spent more time at Burkhardt's. But strangely enough, he had not really been fond of Greta—children, in general, made him shy—and he had even found himself wishing that the ritual had never been established since once it had been, it had to be repeated every day without fail for his complete peace of mind. He was even annoyed if the cat did not appear at the window or if it appeared without its ribbon.

But what he would not give for Greta now! With a perversity which he acknowledged frankly, he imagined that he had been devoted to her, that he had called her pet names and had dandled her on his knee. And that his relationship with her mother had been intimate. He could even long for the irascible porter at the medical college, for the torpid *Badmeister* at the public baths who invariably tried to give him a towel which someone else had just finished using. All these people whom he had known slightly or not at all seemed, in his misshapen reflection, to be his friends.

Dr. Pakheiser was not given to self-pity. A scientific man, he looked on facts. He knew that the *Badmeister* had no more been his friend than was Mrs. Horvath and that, in the end, Greta was the only one who had that stature. And just so now, twenty years later, he had again one friend, one companion, a solitary daily relation with a breathing creature. His companion was a grey tom-cat who called on him each evening with the same unswerving regularity that had brought the little girl to the window every morning. The cat came at seven o'clock, announcing himself with a trilling mew outside the door. He drank the heavy cream his host had poured into a bowl for him and then he spent the evening, until about midnight, curled up in the doctor's lap, asleep. Two or three times in the course of the evening, he roused himself to make an excursion round the room, cleverly picking his way through the decanters, patting the trailing leaves of the philodendron to watch them sway. He washed a little and returned and slept again. Half-roused by the turning of a page or the sound of a match being struck, he would briefly purr as if to say that his affection had not lessened, that he was merely preoccupied. At midnight, Dr. Pakheiser took him downstairs, dropped him on the veranda and watched him, revived by the night air, streak across the lawn and disappear over the wall.

The doctor called him Milenka which in Russian, of which he knew a few words, means "darling." He knew too little Russian, even, to affix the masculine diminutive. "Milenka," he would say, "I-yi-yi-yi, bad puss! Bad boy. Ah, Milenka!" Milenka was an or-

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dinary grey cat with white mittens, a white snout and a shell pink nose. He was rather ugly, for he was underdeveloped and rangy and since he spent a good part of the day in the coal bin, his paws were always smudged. But he had a full, healthy purr and a gentle nature. Rarely did he strop his claws on the carpet, and thanks to the doctor's weekly application of One Spot powder, he had very few fleas.

Dr. Pakheiser realized once with half-ashamed amusement that he had for Milenka a real love, whereas for Greta he had had only a perfunctory gratitude. It was chiefly, he supposed, because he was the cat's protector as well as his friend and had it not been for his suppers of cream and herring, the poor thing would have had to shift for himself on the dump. Indeed, he was quite sure that if he moved away, Mrs. Horvath would have the cat destroyed, for she had not known, she declared cantankerously, when she took over the job, that she would have an animal to care for as well as beds and bathtubs and corridors. No one knew where Milenka had come from. The landlord disclaimed all knowledge of him; the former manageress denied that she had ever fed him or invited him in any way to stay.

The doctor neither liked nor disliked animals. He had always been indifferent to them, save for police dogs whom he feared and cocker spaniels whom he scorned for their somehow homosexual softness. He had never known an individual dog or cat well. So this strong feeling about Milenka perplexed him. Was he turning into an old lady? And would he, together with his cat-fancying, get notions before he was fifty? But these speculations did not really worry him; he was sure that his fundamental motive in helping the cat survive was that he did not like Mrs. Horvath and by his lavish purchases of fish and cream, he was deviously repaying her for her impertinences.

Mrs. Horvath was a dirty, dumpy person in a brown coverall and a blue work shirt. She was anti-semitic in the most extraordinarily forthright way Dr. Pakheiser had ever seen. On the first day of her regime she had been introduced to the doctor by the departing manageress, and she had said, "I think you are Jew, Doctor. But I get rent every Wednesday all same. You don't worry." Each time he recollected this speech (delivered with a smile which could not have disarmed a child) he was so taken aback that he was never able to analyze exactly what she meant. Evidently it was her intention to announce her antipathy to Jews at the very outset so that her tenant would not start off under a misapprehension. It became clear, after a few days, that her rule was firm: she decidedly was not one of those people who say, "Some of my best friends are Jews." On the con-

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trary, she would say, "I hate all Jews." In a way, he preferred her attitude to that, say, of his office girl, Miss Bellamy, who, with aggressive piety, often congratulated him on being one of the chosen people. With Mrs. Horvath, he was dealing with an armed enemy and war, with her, was war. Miss Bellamy, on the other hand, while less wounding, was more treacherous. She could catch him offguard when he was fatigued and, sympathizing with him for being uprooted from his country, could make him prey to a burning, unobjectified anger on behalf of his whole race, and to a weepy grief for himself. Then he would despise America, Connecticut, his cramped and cluttered office, the strapping great charwoman who cleaned it, the smell of workmen in the waiting room and of workmen's cigarettes, but most of all he would despise Miss Bellamy.

Milenka was the immediate cause of war between Mrs. Horvath and Dr. Pakheiser. About two weeks after her arrival, she came one evening to collect the rent. Seeing the cat curled up on the pillow of the bed, she wrinkled her low forehead, bunched up her flat Magyar nose and said, "Cat! I *like* dog. I *like* cat. But outside. Not in the house. In Europe, we have dog, we have cat, but all outside. Inside they make their doing on the carpet and all where. Outside, Doctor, I must ask you." Dr. Pakheiser, unnerved, a man who preferred on all occasions to agree, cried, "I see!" and pretended to himself that this was only a humorous crotchet she was airing conversationally. But she remained firm in the doorway even after he had given her the money and then, so suddenly that he scarcely realized what was happening, she bounded forward toward the bed, shrieking, "Out! Out, you!" and Milenka, his eyes widening with terror, leaped from the bed and ran out the door.

The next evening, though, admitted to the house by the man who left for the graveyard shift at Chance Vought, the cat came back, and the doctor, emboldened by his desire for company and his need for continuing custom, again opened his door. Every night thereafter, except on Wednesday when the rent was due, he came and was not turned away. Mrs. Horvarth, to be sure, was aware of what was going on. In the morning when he went downstairs, he usually found her indolently flicking a dust cloth over the newel post or frankly reading the lodgers' postal cards or sitting, sprawled like a big tomboy, in one of the chairs of the foyer. She would give him a look half-scornful, half angry and would say, "I don't know what happen to you when Father come and see those places on the carpet with sausage marks." Or she would tell him, jeeringly, that Father was going to be outraged when he saw the hole in the curtain the cat had clawed.

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"I tell *you*, Doctor," she would say, "on the grass, okay when they lose their hair. Outside, all right. Inside, on the cushions, hell's bells!" Sometimes she would simply ask him, in the derisive voice of a bad schoolboy, "How you find Milenka last night, Doctor? Plenty good fleas on him, eh?" And once, reaching the limit of her insolence, she followed him out the door and paced up the driveway, calling shrilly, "Milenka! Milenka!"

When he was not in school, the manageress was accompanied by her thirteen year old son, a large boy with a malicious face which forever grinned under a sailor hat. Occasionally it was he who came for the rent and Dr. Pakheiser, fumbling in his wallet, felt that the boy with his obscene leer had expected to find dirty French pictures on the wall or a light woman in the bed. "Hey, Doc," he said once, "You like that cat?" And the doctor, laughing violently, replied, "Ach, yes! Very much." Freddie continued. Pretty soon now "that cat" had better watch its step for he was going to trap and tame some birds and if that dope of an old grey dumbbell got one of them, it would be "goodbye, cat." Dr. Pakheiser, baffled by the assurance of the outsized youth, cried, "Ach, so!" louder and more amiably than ever.

So far, no birds had been caught, but Freddie, on Saturday and Sunday, worked all day long making his traps out of wooden crates, and in time the back yard was so full of them that it appeared he intended to catch entire flocks. And the doctor had no doubt either that Milenka would chase the birds or that Freddie would cruelly punish him.

2.

On this damp April evening, Dr. Pakheiser was about to draw his windowblinds and prepare his supper when he saw Mr. Horvath come out of the cottage bringing a step-ladder which he set up underneath an apple tree. At his approach, the blackbirds all flew off, twittering irritably. Some time before, he had built a bonfire at the water's edge which now was burning brightly, sending up bits of charred paper, like smaller blackbirds. The man called out, "Hey, Freddie, come here a minute." And Freddie came charging through the door, wearing a baseball mitt on one hand. There was a colloquy which the doctor could not hear and then the boy, rushing to the bonfire, hurling his mitt to the ground, cried, "Oh, boy!" He lighted a torch and came back to the step-ladder, sedately so that the flame would not go out, handed it to his father and then climbed up. At the

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top, he wavered a little and let out an exclamation of fright, but he regained his balance and stooped down to receive the torch. He was just tall enough to reach the puffy white tent of caterpillars in a high crotch of the tree. The doctor watched, sickened, saw yellow flames shoot up as the fat tumor caught fire. Freddie had not thought ahead. A worm fell upon his upturned face and he screamed with revulsion and let the torch drop to the ground where it went on burning and sending up black smoke. The work, though, was done and while his father beat the caterpillars to death with the back of a shovel where they had fallen in the grass, the boy came down the ladder and went towards the cottage, wiping his face with both hands as though it never would be clean again. Mr. Horvath laughed at him and went on killing the pests. Mrs. Horvath came to the screen door and hooted at her son, "Ha! Ha!" she laughed. "You keep the mouth open next time and see what comes in." Restored to his normal spirits, Freddie hooted back, "Yeah, like fun I will! Yeah, in a pig's valise I will!"

There was a miaow at the doctor's door. He drew down the windowblind sharply, shuddering at what he had just seen. There was something primeval in those people; their communal enjoyment of the annihilation of the caterpillars was so stupid and so brutish that the doctor actually retched. Then he let in the refined, soft-moving cat.

"I-yi-yi-yi!" he said stooping to pick Milenka up. "I-yi-yi-yi, my bad puss, my bad boy." Milenka stretched his head forward and rubbed the top of it against Dr. Pakheiser's chin, purring loudly. "Milenka," murmured the man, "Ah, my good friend, my dearest one." He poured the cream into the cereal bowl, fetched a quart of Irish ale from the windowsill and, sitting down, said to his companion, "Gut' Mahlzeit."

When they had both finished and the doctor had put away the food, he settled once more in the rocking chair with the brandy decanter at his elbow. He opened the journal that had come that day and began methodically with the first article, one on the use of sulfa drugs in the treatment of sinusitis. He had read only a few sentences when Milenka leaped to his lap. Dr. Pakheiser ran his fingers under the jaw and around the ears, laid his whole hand on the little grey belly to feel the vibration and read on, at last in repose now that his house was complete. But there was an uneasiness stirring at the back of his mind and although he concentrated and extracted the full meaning from all he read that night, he observed when he rose at twelve to put Milenka out that he had drunk three times as much brandy as was his custom and had made a great inroad into the pack-

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age of Egyptian Prettiests which he never smoked after supper.

That night he had a strange dream. He dreamed of D-day. He and little Greta Jost had come to wish Mr. Horvath good luck and they had set out to find rooms. The hotels were crowded, for the holiday throngs were tremendous. They sauntered up the boardwalk, admiring the bright tailored shingle where fashionable people were gathered for the start of the regatta. They entered a hotel which was quite deserted save for a man sitting alone on a little mezzanine at one end of the lobby. He sat at a round amethyst-colored glass table, drinking a very pink cocktail, and as they approached, he stood up smiling and cordially extending his hand. They recognized the President and they were gratified when he called them both by name. His address was old-fashioned: he said "Miss Greta" and "Mr. Alfred." Linking arms, the three of them went out. The President said that while he wished the invasion to be as leisurely as possible, it would be folly, would it not, to give the signal too late in the day? Did not his young friends agree that despite our great advances in electricity, there was something essentially *better* about sunlight? Never was there so civilized a man! In the pure, brilliant sky, exquisite airplanes circled and swooped like the loveliest of birds. There was such a profusion of scarlet! In the flags, in the hats of the spectators, on the wings of planes, in colossal bouquets in vases a mile high situated on the beach at intervals of fifteen yards. The yachts were all ready, freshly painted, brightly bannered for the race to Europe.

Alfred and Greta were the first to land. As they walked up the ramp, he noticed the tiny Scotch plaid ribbons that bound her pigtails. Wandering, they could not find the *Conditorei* he had suggested although time and time again they set forth from the Heiliggeist cathedral and took the familiar street. Nor was it possible, as formerly, to see the ruined castle from the bridge, and Greta said, "Herr Pakheiser, I don't believe this is Heidelberg. Now I am afraid and I want my mother. I think we have come to Heilbronn by mistake." But Alfred pointed to the marking which clearly read, "Philosophen Weg," and he soothed her, "Don't be frightened, dearest." They were speeding in a dirty express train through Freiburg, its towers and steeples flattened out like any corpse, its vineyards wasted with drought and disease. The Alps diminished as they neared them. No trees were left. The sun was small and red like an ember. Alfred, receiving a wicker-covered jug of wine from a weeping man who shared their compartment, was too touched and too embarrassed to begin a conversation, but at last he thought of something. "Sir," he said solemnly, "Sir, did you ever go fishing in the Sound for bass, using

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a caddis worm as bait?" The wine in the man's throat gurgled like a death rattle as he looked out at the levelled mountains. "There was a short notice in some review or other," he said, "outlined in black. Even so . . . even so . . ."

In the limbo where he waited a moment before he wakened fully, he thought he was writing the opening paragraph of a children's story in which a little boy lay on his stomach drinking water from a stream. Suddenly his eyes encountered two others, hooded, sparkling with some horrible intelligence. They belonged to a monstrous caddis worm which advanced through the water as he withdrew.

He woke violently. He clasped his hands to his forehead and in the darkness softly moaned. "I must control myself. I must not perish here."

3.

Late in May, Milenka disappeared. Dr. Pakheiser was disturbed but not really anxious until the fourth night passed and he still dined alone. On the fifth morning he diffidently asked Mrs. Horvath if she had seen the cat, and he detected something doubtful, something covert in her reply. She was not arrogant and her eyes seemed unable to focus on his face. She said—uncomfortably, it seemed to him—"No, Doctor. I see him Sunday. My husband see him Sunday. He come back, don't you worry." Then she looked directly at him and smiled, "He know where his sardine is, I tell you." The doctor was smoking and as he went to the table to drop a long ash into the tray there, his hand abruptly shook and the ashes fell to the carpet. He and the woman both briefly looked at them, dispersed fanwise on the green border. And he knew then that she was hiding something, for she did not reproach him for his clumsiness even though she had just finished using the carpet sweeper. He was so angry that he stumbled to the door and his rage so blinded him that he had to lean against the jamb a moment before he could see the steps. It was not, at this moment, that he was mourning the loss of Milenka; it was that he had sensed, despite her near-civility and his own timorousness, as killing a hatred between them as though they were two jungle beasts, determined to destroy one another. "If she has killed my cat," he brooded as he drove through the gate, "then I . . . " but he could not finish the sentence. He could devise no penalty high enough for such wickedness, no penance sufficiently humiliating.

For two weeks nothing passed between the manageress and her lodger. Nothing, that is, but glances boldly indignant on the doctor's

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part, guilty on the woman's. It seemed to him that the life of the rest of the house had ceased, that all was at an ominous standstill before a final battle to the death. And then, incredibly, the cat came back. When he first heard the mewing outside his door on the dot of seven, Dr. Pakheiser could not believe his ears. Not until the sound had been repeated two or three times did he open the door. His joy at the reunion was less than his shame for falsely accusing Mrs. Horvath and less than his bewilderment at her shifty-eyed embarrassment. Apparently Milenka had just wandered off somewhere as tom-cats do in the spring. He was thin and mangy and his coat was matted with cockleburrs and beggar's lice. His purr had a bronchial rasp and the doctor made a note on his memorandum pad to bring home a worm pill the next night. Nor had he any appetite for the bit of herring which was all that the doctor had to offer him, and after less than half an hour, he asked to be let out. But this strangeness, under good case, would pass. That night the doctor slept well.

"Good morning," he cried heartily as he met Mrs. Horvath in the hall the following day. "Have you seen my friend, Mrs. Horvath? He came back for his sardine as you promised me."

The woman's eyes opened from their sleepiness, her lips parted in disbelief, and she said, "Back? That cat back?" Dr. Pakheiser assured her that what he said was true and at that moment, to confirm him, Milenka leaped to the windowsill from the veranda and sat there in profile, blinking his eyes. Mrs. Horvath stared, "I do not know," she said. "It is like a dream." The doctor surmised, then, that the cat had been put into a bag and taken into the country somewhere and been abandoned. It was scarcely believable that he could be so gross as to laugh triumphantly and almost to sob his words: "Yes, Mrs. Horvath, my dearest friend is restored to me!"

She looked away from the window. "But, Doctor, I do not know. My son, he catch birds all while now. His school finish pretty soon. I think he don't want that cat here."

"It is cruel to catch birds," he said severely, no longer tyrannized over by her now that he had got his cat back. "And *I* want him here even if that boy doesn't." It gave him pleasure to say "that boy" just as she and her son spoke of "that cat."

"But, Doctor, the cat kill birds. My boy don't kill them. He make them into good pet."

"It is the cat's nature to kill birds. But it is not the nature of man to take prisoners."

"No?" she said. The look of cunning returned to her face. "What we fight war for, then, Doctor?"

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"I don't know, Mrs. Horvath, I am sure." He was overpowered with disgust that he should be haggling with this obtuse woman over the life of a diseased cat, and that he should be confronted by so irrelevant a question which he could not answer and which, in spite of its fatuous context, made him feel that because he could only say he did not know, like an unprepared schoolboy, his mind was growing dull. And just as he was preparing to bid the manageress good morning and to hurry to his office to plunge himself into work, she threw out a remark more imbecilic than the first but one that utterly confounded him. She said, "My son protect birds from cats just like America protect Jews from Hitler."

For a moment, before he had collected himself, he read an awful symbolic wisdom into this absurdity. Unhampered by learning, in a country where she could not read the language and could barely speak it, where she could be influenced only by the most basic of national prejudices and loyalties, she was truly a natural enemy. Here was the perfect, the pure hatred; the real thing was in Mrs. Horvath's simple heart. He was not so far gone yet as to think that she was bent on getting rid of the cat out of vengeance. Her reasons were more human than that; she did not like cats and she wanted to indulge her son. But at the same time, there was something so sure in her figure of speech that it was as if, from now on, she would implicitly believe it, would even repeat it in later conversations.

In reply, Dr. Pakheiser only smiled. On his way out, he gave Milenka a pat on the head and said loudly, "I-yi-yi-yi, bad puss!" and walked jauntily round the house to his car, whistling. Whistling, as the phrase went, in the dark.

All spring, Dr. Pakheiser trod on eggs. Each evening when he came home and parked his car in the backyard where Freddie was at work on his bird traps, his heart constricted with apprehension. This would be the night, he thought, when Milenka would not come. The boy, grinning even as he pounded in the nails, looked up with a dispassionate greeting. "Hi, Doc. This is for me to get me an oriole in, see? And that there one is for me to get me a purple grackle in. I lure 'em—I know how they whistle and I whistle and they think I'm a bird—and then they get in this little place here, see, and I pull a string and the door comes down and they can't get out. And then I get 'em so tame they'll eat right out of my hand." Once or twice the doctor inquired about his school with the intention of keeping things running smoothly between them. He went to the nuns to whom he referred collectively as "Sister." "Sister flunked me in Latin but she gave me B in Algebra and D plus in English." But it bored

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him to talk about the contents of his days; he would break off suddenly and pointing to the blackbirds in the dead tree would say, "See them? I don't want 'em but I could have 'em all if I did." And the doctor would look up at the crowded branches, object of his dreamy contemplation every day. "They're dumb birds," Freddie would say as he threw a pebble into the tree and they all disbanded. "They don't know where they're at." Dr. Pakheiser would reply, "I don't think any birds at all know where they're at." They had come to this conventional rite through a mutual understanding: the doctor disliked birds, the boy disliked cats. Neither spoke of his aversion, but the seriousness underlying their banter implied, "Your pet stays where it belongs, or else."

Milenka was soon prospering. His coat came in soft and shining; his purr cleared and his eyes lost the milkiness that had clouded them when he first came home. He was full grown now and, obliged to assume the responsibilities of a male animal, sometimes missed a meal and spent the time with a plump old tabby who howled for him on the stone wall. But good friend that Milenka was, if he failed to come one evening, he sneaked through the door early the next morning when someone went out to the day-shift. The doctor came to enjoy these morning visits even more than the evening ones. He would go back to bed after he had poured out the cream and lie there watching; when the cat had finished, he would jump to the bed, walk carefully up Dr. Pakheiser's legs to the thigh and there establish himself. But there was one drawback to his coming in the daytime. Ironically, a pair of wrens had built a nest under the eave of the corner window and Milenka, hearing them rustle and chirp, would sit up, his whiskers twitching, his sleek little body poised for a leap. And whenever this happened, Dr. Pakheiser felt a thrill of disquiet, afraid the cat would commit a crime during the day while he was at his office and could not intercede for him.

Just as Milenka thrived, so did Freddie's successes multiply and by the first of June, the clumsy home-made cages in the garage were half full of orioles and robins and finches and flickers which, at feeding time, gave out a dissonant and reedy clamor. One Sunday afternoon, when school was over for him and the skies were full of birds, Freddie stalked a robin in full view of the doctor's windows. He crept across the lawn on his hands and knees towards the large unmoving bird. The advance could either have been for the purpose of murder or for ministration to an injured wing. It was beautiful to watch. There was no sudden nervous jerking, no change of pace. When he was within two feet of the bird, his hands left the ground

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and his lips parted in his earnestness. His posture and his skill made the doctor think of a praying mantis, one of those miraculously ugly creatures which he had seen on the road under a tulip tree and had taken at first for withering seed pods. Now, a foot away, the hands parted. He was ready for the capture. Dr. Pakheiser found himself holding his breath and could not tell whether he wanted the bird to foil the boy or wished to see it taken. Directly under the certain hands, the prey was still unaware. Now they descended and gently took the bird. Freddie stroked its head tenderly with his forefinger and when the captive made a movement to escape, he drew it to his chest smiling rapturously. And the doctor might have warmed towards him, seeing the innocent happiness in his face, had he not bawled out, "Hey, Mom! Got me another one. Boy, oh, boy, am I *good!*"

4.

Its head high, its tail feathers trailing the ground, the great cock-pheasant moved with dignity out of the shadow of the apple tree into the light where all the glory of its habiliments shone like a sun-struck diamond. Dr. Pakheiser who had been roused early by an urgent telephone call, paused in his dressing to watch the wonderful bird. He had never seen one before save in pictures which he had not altogether believed. The japanning of its plumage had been masterful: emerald blazed forth beside gold and gold beside scarlet. There was something about it so rich and unusual that he did not think of it as a bird at all but as a costly ornament for the patch of bright grass where now it stopped, surveying the terrain as if this were its own dominion. But the kingly creature was no wiser than its plebeian brothers, and it began to walk rapidly towards one of Freddie's traps. The doctor immediately flung wide his window, unfastened the screen and leaned out, shouting and waving his arms to scare away the foolish bird. He disturbed the sleeping wrens in the eave and they flew wildly against the screen, then sailed off to the apple tree. But the pheasant was deaf to warnings, walked complacently towards his prison. In a frenzy, Dr. Pakheiser reached back to the bedside table and picked up his metal ashtray from Milan. He hurled it at the pheasant. It fell close to the quick feet and instantly the bird turned, running, this time, back over the grass through the shadow of the apple tree and disappeared in the tall weeds that grew about the abandoned boats. Freddie ran out of the cottage. The doctor fastened his screen and stepped back out of sight behind the drapery

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at the window, but he watched the boy whose face was contorted with fury and frustration. Tears began as he picked up the ash tray. For a second he stared at it as if he were not sure what to do with it and then, with a bawl, he flung it into the water which was at low tide and, cursing at the top of his voice, went indoors.

Dr. Pakheiser finished dressing. He knew that he was not steady enough to shave, but he washed his face and hands slowly and thoroughly, using the nail brush with unaccustomed vigor. He lighted a cigarette and sat down, aware that his delay was selfish. But his patient seemed remote, the illness unimportant. It was not until the cigarette had burned down to nothing that he got up, found his hat and went out. He stole quietly down the stairs and round the house. There was no sign of life in the backyard. From within the cottage came the sound of Mrs. Horvath's voice; she spoke loudly but in Hungarian and he understood nothing of what she said. He gained his car and he was safe. But he knew that the score was not yet settled, for as he drove away, he saw Freddie's face at the window, the strangely Mongolian nose spread out as it pressed against the pane. This, finally, would be the day of reckoning.

When he came home at five that afternoon, Dr. Pakheiser found both Mrs. Horvath and Freddie in the large front bedroom downstairs. Someone had just moved out and they were making it ready for a new tenant. They were turning the mattress, but when they saw the doctor, they stopped, the great thing folded half way over and held in their strong red hands.

Mrs. Horvath said, "Good night, Doctor. I bring you ashtray tomorrow. You lose your blue one?" He had not anticipated so devious an attack and he was nonplussed. Since all three of them knew well enough that the ashtray was lying in the mud, it was absurd to carry on her game, to say, for example, that he had taken it to the office. And so he replied ambiguously, "Oh, thank you. If you have an extra one, I will be glad to have it." He started towards the stairs, but they had not finished with him yet.

Mrs. Horvath said, "Was it a good day, Doctor?"

"A busy day," he said. "But, yes, a good one, I think."

The boy, his chin upon the mound of the mattress, fixed him with the fearless eye of the insulted child and slowly said, "It wasn't a good day for me, Doctor. It was a bad day for me, wasn't it, Mom?"

His mother giggled and winked at Dr. Pakheiser. "His birds! He think of nothing but his birds. Today he don't catch one big pheasant and this evening another get out of her house and fly away."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said the doctor. "But perhaps your bird will

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come back. They seem so tame. They eat out of your hand, don't they?"

"That bird won't come back," said the boy. "*I* know what happened to him. That cat got him. You get a bird tame and if it gets out anybody can catch it." The cold, accusing face began to contract in a childish pucker and tears hindered the next words: "That damned cat ate my bird!" He wrenched the mattress out of his mother's hands and flung it back onto the springs and flung himself upon it, sobbing maniacally. "And if I catch that cat, I'll kill it! I'll kill it! I'll kill it!"

The doctor flushed with embarrassment at this display, unchecked by the mother who merely stood smiling beside the bed. In time, the tantrum spent itself and Freddie lay shaking, face down on the naked bed. In the quiet, Mrs. Horvath, deceptively matter-of-fact, said, "Doctor, did you read that book by the doctor of Hitler? He say Hitler don't like women, only men? You think that true, Doctor?"

He could not chart her course, begun so remotely. He stalled, took off his glasses and put them on again. She went on. "I hate Hitler, Doctor. But I do not believe all what they say. This book I buy in the drug store for one dollar ninety eight cents. I think a Jew write the book out of madness for what Hitler do to Jews."

If only he could turn his leaden flesh and carry it up the stairs to his own room and lock the door upon these savages! There rest, there drink his dubonnet, there be at home! But a score of weights held him immobile, facing the barbarous woman and he listened to her: "I hate Hitler," she repeated. "I like Jews. But if you're mad you don't all times tell the truth, isn't it? So this doctor in this book I got say Hitler like men. You know? What you think of that, Doctor?" She went on and on. Unskilled as were her thrusts, they were direct. And when at last she was finished and had dismissed him (did she, he wondered, in her marvellously malicious mind think that perhaps *he* was the "doctor of Hitler"? Or that *he* did not like women, only men?) he felt trampled upon. Actually he ached and when he got to his room, he was sure he was coming down with something. Never in all these three years had his loneliness been so acute. It sprained his whole body, buried his faculties so deeply that sensation, if it came at all, was ambiguous and incomplete. Impassively, he accepted the anonymous voices of machines: radios, motor boats, factory whistles, trains, a random bomber. They came to him thickly insulated so that, shrill or loud as they might really be, they did not penetrate his mind but lay, all of them together, in a humming mass on the threshold. His thoughts faltered like sleep-burdened eyes or

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attached themselves with imbecilic fixity upon one trivial object. For a long time he studied a minute fissure in the plaster of the wall beside the window. Later, he meditated intently upon the small, dispirited American flag on a pole beside the Sikorsky plant, and when at last he broke from this trance, it was only to become absorbed in the spectacle of a fouled old fish-bucket raffishly perched on a stump at the water's edge. Once, from some remote region of the house, there came the sound of a music box tinkling over a radio and at least a hundred times he stubbornly reiterated the words he knew it heralded: "PEPSI COLA HITS THE SPOT." At last, passing his hand over his cool forehead, he closed his eyes. The sounds cohered as in delirium. He could still visualize the blackbirds and fancied them to be a deathless band of flies which refused to walk upon the glass where they could be swatted. Hearing a train screaming in the station for passengers to Boston, he tried to imagine that he stood in the Bismarckgärten waiting for the yellow tram to Mannheim, but all he could see, in his mind's eye, were the shabby girls at the flowerstall deftly plucking daffodils from the pails of water. Next, he pretended that the train he heard was the express to Munich, and this time the recollections spun out effortlessly. He had gone to Salzburg once for a fortnight at the house of a class-mate, a yellow-haired boy named Heine Waffenschmidt. He remembered that in the compartment there had been two soldiers on leave who had played chess the whole journey and had gladly drunk the wine offered to them by a tipsy letter-carrier on his way to Garmisch-Partenkirchen to see his tubercular daughter who was dying. The old man's blue coat glistened with age and the brass buttons on it were so tarnished that when the light fell on them they did not shine. *"Danke,* Papa," the soldiers had said. Once, at the end of a game, they stretched and yawned and told the old man what they were planning to do. "And Papa," said one of them, "What do you think? We have hired a cafe and ordered a keg of Löwenbräu and we'll have Scotch whiskey besides." Dr. Pakheiser remembered how whenever the train stopped at a station, the pause seemed as clearly defined as a box; his eyes burned now as if he were looking up at the bright blue ceiling light. It was hard to redeem much of the two weeks in Salzburg. He had been happy, he was quite sure, and dimly he recalled a ski tournament after which he and Heine had gone to a rathskeller for *Glühwein.* There had been a troop of players on their way to Danzig and one of them, an effeminate young man, had described the jumpers he had seen that afternoon. *"Und er geht so und so und so!"* he said, gesturing with his hands. *" 'Swar unglaublich wunderbar."*

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The memory was flat and he rejected it. He tried to think of his patients, but could think, instead, only of his office where something was always wrong. The electricity unaccountably went off or the water ran rusty or the windows got stuck. Today Miss Bellamy had worn an artificial rose in her hair and he had already been so nervous that the sight of it had nearly sent him into a tailspin.

He had a glass of brandy which quieted his fidgeting hands. The smoke from the flat Egyptian Prettiest gave off a fragrance like sweet wood, but tonight, it did not bring back Greta. Through the open windows came sharply the sound of Mr. Horvath's voice warning his son who was clipping the hedge. "Watch out for snakes, Freddie." The shears clicked steadily; the boy was a good worker. With his glass in his hand, the doctor went to the window and stood beside it looking out. The appalling grin had come back to Freddie's face in which there were no signs of sorrow or even of anger. Once he stood up straight to rest his back from its stooping position and the big clippers dangled by their handle from his little finger.

Dr. Pakheiser went straight through the brandy and even then had not had enough to drink, so he replaced the empty decanter with the one half full of Kümmel. He thought of the supper he soon would eat and he began to wonder what the Horvath family had upon their table. For some reason, he had an idea they were fond of mussels (which made him ill) and he was positive they enjoyed the displeasing flavor of celeriac in their soup. They would have chunks of fat meat; they would especially like rutabaga, watermelon, molasses, pancakes and hot tamales. Again, he wondered if they ever bathed. He had frequently seen Mrs. Horvath's wash hanging on the line in the back yard and had been certain that she used neither soap nor hot water in her laundry. He suspected that they did not brush their teeth which were very long and extremely black. He did not, to tell the truth, altogether understand why the United States had given Mr. Horvath citizenship.

The sun went down and the heliocopters left the sky. At a little before seven, the doctor heard a noise in his room and, conscious that he was quite drunk, he allowed his full lips to curl into a smile as he thought of the pleasure Milenka would have if this were a mouse he might catch for his first course. The sound came again, a faint rustling. He thought at first it was in the closet, but then, at its repetition, concluded that it was in the fireplace. Rather slowly, for his hands were awkward, he took away the flowered screen and looked in at the bare, clean hearth. The sound continued, close beside him. He stuck his head in the opening and listened and it came again. There

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was no doubt about it, something was trapped in the chimney. He returned to his chair in indecision and poured out another glass of Kümmel and considered. He knew that it was Freddie's lost bird, beating its wings against the walls.

The boy had left the hedge and his shears lay atop the formal leaves. He would be at his supper now (were they not, at this very moment, spooning up the repellant sauce that surrounded their mussels?) so there was still time in which to choose between an armistice and revenge. For a few minutes the man sat still in his rocking chair, listening tensely to the desperate wings. But presently he could endure the creature's agony no longer and he left his room, having decided to drive a bargain with the boy.

From the top of the stairs, Dr. Pakheiser could see through the window to the left of the front door. Milenka was sitting on the wall, looking archly down at the tabby who crouched in the grass. "I-yi-yi-yi, bad puss," he thought. His feet were slow on the steps and he clutched the bannister with an unnaturally moist hand. He was half way down when Mr. Horvath came into his ken. The large man moved soundlessly around the corner of the house and stood at the edge of the lawn under a young elm tree, and in a moment, Freddie joined him, carrying a rifle. Dr. Pakheiser hesitated for the length of time it took Mr. Horvath to aim and fire and then, in order not to see the body fall off the wall, turned and went back to his room.

Late, after the Chance Vought worker had gone to the graveyard-shift, Dr. Pakheiser opened the damper of the fireplace and a dead oriole fell to the hearth. He gazed abstractedly at the black and golden feathers and touched the soft body with the fire tongs. A bright apple leaf was caught under one wing. He picked the bird up carefully with a piece of newspaper and put it in a box which he found on the shelf of his closet. He carried the box downstairs and into the backyard and he floated it on the water, blue with the lights from the factory windows. He pondered if it would float to the Sound and if it did, how far it would go then. A mile on the way to Europe? Halfway? "Go, Milenka," he addressed the box which already had drifted several feet from the bank. In the cool air his head cleared a little and he felt a wonderful exhilaration as if he had been freed of a persistent pain. He ran like a young man back to the house, took the stairs two at a time and when he got to his r he lay down without undressing and at once was fast asleep.

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Poems

THE QUAKER GRAVEYARD IN NANTUCKET

For Warren Winslow, dead at sea

Let man have dominion over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and the beasts and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth.

I

A brackish reach of shoal off Madaket,—
The sea was still breaking violently and night
Had steamed into our North Atlantic Fleet,
When the drowned sailor clutched the drag-net. Light
Flashed from his matted head and marble feet,
He grappled at the net
With the coiled, hurdling, muscles of his thighs:
The corpse was bloodless, a botch of reds and whites,
Its open, staring eyes
Were lustreless dead-lights
Or cabin-windows on a stranded hulk,
Heavy with sand. We weight the body, close
Its eyes and heave it seaward whence it came,
Where the heel-head dogfish barks its nose
On the dismembered Pequod. The man's name
Is scribbled with red chalk.
Sailors, we pitch this portent at the sea
Where Atlantean dreadnaughts shall confess
Its hell-bent deity,
When we are powerless
To buttress this Atlantic bulwark, faced
By the earth-shaker, green, unwearied, chaste
In his steel-scales. Ask for no Orphean lute
To strum life back. The guns of the steeled fleet
Recoil and then repeat
The last salute.

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II

Whenever winds are moving and their breath
Heaves at the roped-in bulwarks of this pier
The terns and sea-gulls tremble at your death
In these home-waters. Sailor, can you hear
The Pequod's sea-wings, beating landward, fall
Headlong and break on our Atlantic wall
Off 'Sconset, where the yawing S-boats splash
The bellbuoy with ballooning spinnakers,
As the intangled, screeching mainsheet clears
The blocks: off Madaket, where lubbers lash
The heavy surf and throw their long lead squids
For blue-fish? Sea-gulls blink their heavy lids
Seaward. The winds' wings beat upon the stones,
Sailor, and scream for you and the claws rush
At the sea's throat and wring it in the slush
Of this old Quaker graveyard where the bones
Cry out in the long night for the hurt beast
Bobbing by Ahab's whaleboats in the East.

III

This is the end of the whaleroad and the whale
Who spewed Nantucket bones on the thrashed swell
And stirred the troubled waters to whirlpools
To send the Pequod packing off to hell:
This is the end of them, three-quarters fools,
Snatching at straws to sail
Seaward and seaward on the turntail whale,
Spouting out blood and water as it rolls,
Sick as a dog, to these Atlantic shoals;
Clamavimus, O depths. Let the sea-gulls wail

For water, for the deep, where the high tide
Mutters to its hurt self, mutters and ebbs.
Waves wallow in their wash, go out and out,
Leave only the death-rattle of the crabs,
The beach increasing, its enormous snout,
Sucking the ocean's side.
This is the end of running on the waves;

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We are poured out like water. Who will dance
The mast-lashed master of Leviathans
Up from this field of Quakers in their unstoned graves?

IV

When the whale's viscera go and the roll
Of its corruption overruns this world
Beyond tree-swept Nantucket and Wood's Hole
And Martha's Vineyard, Sailor, will your sword
Whistle and fall and sink into the fat?
In the great ash-pit of Jehosaphat
The bones cry for the blood of the white whale,
The fat-flukes arch and wamble about its ears,
The death-lance churns into the whale, and tears
The gun-blue swingle, heaving like a flail
And hacks the coiling life out: it works and drags
And rips the sperm-whale's midriff into rags,
Gobbets of blubber roll to wind and weather;
Sailor, ospreys go round the stoven timber
Where the morning stars sing out together,
Thunderheads shake the white surf and unlimber
Ordnance on the flag-nailed mast-head. Hide,
Our steel, Jonas Messias, in Thy side.

V

Our Lady of Walsingham

There once the penitents took off their shoes
And then walked barefoot the remaining mile;
And the small trees, a stream and hedgerows file
Slowly along the munching English lane,
Like cows to the old shrine, until you lose
Track of your dragging pain.
The stream flows down under the druid tree,
Shiloah's whirlpools gurgle and make glad
The castle of God. Sailor, you were glad
And whistled *Sion* by that stream. But see:

Our Lady, too small for her canopy,

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Sits near the altar. There's no comeliness
At all or charm in that expressionless
Face with its heavy eyelids. As before,
This face, for centuries a memory,
Non est species, neque decor,
Expressionless, expresses God: it goes
Past castled Sion. She knows what God knows,
Not Calvary's Cross or crib at Bethlehem
Now, and the world shall come to Walsingham.

VI

The empty winds are creaking and the oak
Loosens a snow-slide on the blacked-out hearse,
The boughs are trembling in the snow-wrapt winter's
Wailing, perhaps for the untimely stroke
Of the greased wash exploding on a shoal-bell
In the old mouth of the Atlantic. It's well;
Atlantic, you are fouled with the blue sailors,
Sea-monsters, upward angel, downward fish:
Unmarried and corroding, spare of flesh,
Mart once of supercilious, wing'd clippers,
Atlantic, where your bell-trap guts its spoil,

The sailor sprawls in the struck ship's crude oil
And you could cut the oiled winds with a knife
Here in Nantucket, and cast up the time
When the Lord God formed man from the sea's slime
And breathed into his face the breath of life;
And blue-lunged Borsas lumbers to the kill.
The Lord survives the rainbow of His will.

ROBERT LOWELL

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THE FAIR FRIGIDITY

There was a lady fair and fairly bright,
Whose amiable manner charmed a knight;
She led him unmolested through the night,
A foolish knight.

Black were her eyes and both her lips choice red,
Her arms were rounded as was throat and head,
She led him like a bone that, startled, bled,
And soon was dead.

Never had stars beheld so white a path
As that which down she carried him at last;
Her smile was brilliant, hidden was her wrath,
A deadly bath.

Bathe in this stream, said she, your bones are white.
The knight stood ivory in the sweet moonlight.
Bathe in this stream, said she, feigned appetite
But hid her spite.

The knight, so fairly foolish, garnet-limbed,
Threw his strength fully, streaming toward her whim,
And once within the waters, bobbed to swim
Grasping the brim.

But she, so leonine and free, exclaimed
His vigor was not pure in one so maimed
By love, affection's druggist; he grew tamed
And felt ashamed.

Float in the languorous bath, cried she, her voice
Stemming an arrow through the midnight; moist
It entered in the kingdom of his choice,
A narrow noise.

O love! cried he, make me of waters drunk!
And tossed his arms until his sinews shrunk,
His soul expanding to a molten chunk,
When down he sunk.

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True love! and smiling, swallowed with the words
A stream of whetted waves that, listening, stirred
And entered whence the lovely words they heard,
Like mouth-flown birds.

The lady fair and brighter far, now sad,
Watched the slow sinking of a knight gone mad,
And saw translucently the minnowed shad
Lick at her lad.

So soft the pillowed stones beneath her love,
So perfect the small fish that swam above,
So like white fowls the pebbles seemed, low doves;
She fairly loved.

Cried to moon, love! but there remaining stood;
Cried to sea, love! but waters were as wood.
Wept a tear, woe! but could not make her blood
Do what it should.

O cursed by gravity of life in her,
Her lifted arms but toppled where they were.
Against the cosmic tedium no spur
Could waken her.

And yet her sir lay in his white repose,
Weighted against the worlds through which she rose,
An upright scar, imbibing with her throes
Oxygen foes.

Blandishing will, her only tool in this,
She vowed to rest assured upon his kiss,
To match the smile that pebbled from his bliss,
Wished his damp kiss.

The waters in a snowy drift of small
Uttering blossoms, flowed beneath her pall,
Beguiling triumph and inciting fall;
She leapt into its wall.

For wooden-willed, the moment that she sprang,
The waves that heretofore with babbling rang,

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Now froze in fixity, a finished fang
At her harangue.

Poor maid, less fair but wiser in the leap,
Broke as a stick of wood might, thrusting, break
If cast upon a heap; her knight lay steep
Gazing up to her from his watered deep.

RUTH HERSCHBERGER

D-DAY H-HOUR PLUS X

Pass by the very window where even now you are: you'd really gone
With keys of sleight-of-hand to the fountain in the Plaza.
And then come home. Commuted. Suburban, yes, but torn:
Wax is the fruit on the table, substantial and yellow as stone;
Corrupt is the flesh in the Plaza that lies near the city Azusa.
You cannot say which need was more (and more your own):
The bottomless fountain, the durable room.

Pass by on D-day plus forty and three or one thousand and eight.
H-hour recurs, persists, conscripts, expropriates the graves
In which you laid (with boned fingers, or fingers effete
And exact as scissors) the chilled bodies, each discrete
And satisfactory. Sit still as dawn and still the hound arrives
To dig and nag the catacomb. And eyes alarmed
Behold the sacked tombs, the bodies warmed.

Pass by. (Unless perhaps you corked the room, locked the mind
In the Father's vault) you are not free. No key may turn the hour
For the bid is iron, for there is no bed. The fountain winds
With winding arms; the hour declares, unveils and rends
Obliterated pacts, settlements and sins. And, even more,
Restores. These were you and they are yours
Again to seal with mouth, to hammer at with claws.

Pass by like muted submarines, flying ships or twittering machines:
Your square, your fountain, your city near Azusa. You are haunted.

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You are injured, ridden, healed, but always gibbeted in dreams
Then sprung; and springing; and wheeled. (The scene
Is of a bird above an ocean stain.) Hunter and hunted,
From window to fountain, you shuttle and scheme
With the shuttle-cocks that know their way between.

Pass by, egyptian, urged and friezed, sew with eyes of thread
The ragged fabric: within the images of eyes the cloth is patched;
Beneath the eyes the hands do rend. Roses in the bed
Were flesh; voices in the square were not: The word was deed
But now is dead. The dog is here and you are watched.
Maid and midden, Engineer of the city near Azusa.
Man and manned, Bombardier of the fountain in the Plaza.

HARVEY BREIT

SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM ET MENTUM MORTALIA TANGUNT

Across the huddled lamplight window glass
is black, ashine with that last, blacker mass,
the drifting shadow of arrested wings.
Here is the empty chair, and here, alas!
the awaited time, when time seems most to pass.

We are, in midmost ground, our own dead kings:

Because in dark are bred the tears of things
that frost the heart, cold dew on prostrate grass,
new psyche gathers gooseflesh in, and sings,
in its dark corners, its wild waste winnowings.

COMMUNIQUES FROM YALTA

Not heart, not soul and not their joined intent,
not these alone, but the whole process, breaking;
these are not salvo sounds, but fire raking
all hope, all memory, all undertaking.

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—Who mocks the mockers when mockery is spent?
When will this dry tree I clutch be done shaking?

R. P. BLACKMUR

WHILE READING HISTORY

Among Florentine cinquecentists taste in manuscripts,
Women, or painters' techniques was the sign;
Old masters, now, were patronized protégés then,
Recording crimson velvets.

And Barnum collected freaks in a gilded age
While buffalo were shot by great shots, hundreds in a day
Groaning monumentally over our expanding country.
Little shots gathered pottage.

We acquire,—what do we acquire now?—
Crying for one more turn, with no slogans that can catch an abstract meaning,
Re ching beyond our reach for the merry-go-round's gold ring,
Sp nding words wildly as coin, who are beggars for tomorrow.

LENORE G. MARSHALL

1914

Now IT IS no longer the war, but a war: our own has taken its place. The World War is only the First World War; and, truly, these are photographs not of the world, but of the first world. But for twenty years, while the wire and trenches in the mud were everybody's future, how could any of it seem old-fashioned to us?—it was our death. But when we died differently we saw that it was old.

The men who seize Principe wear little vests and sashes, skirts with under-leggings, fezzes; one tugs at his arm in a stand-up collar, peg-top trousers, and a chauffeur's cap; and he himself has hair like a rope wig, a face the camera draws out into the Mad Hatter's. The

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Archduke, spotted with the blood that does, indeed, look exactly like our own (the trees, too, are human), has moustaches like a Keystone Cop's. No one is laughing.

This, next week, is the war the crowds hear. The crowds in their stiff straw hats, their starched high collars—the women in shirtwaists or muslin, their hats shapeless with fruit and flowers—the crowds stand in black under the summer sun, holding their rolled-up umbrellas: does Job fear God for naught? It is the world of Bernstein, a universe where even the Accuser is troubled, and Time hesitates: Surely these states are eternal? Troops march through the crowds; some in blue swallow-tailed coats, their bayonets high as hop-poles; some in grey. One of these, his pockets bulging, wears a round cap like an old joke; he is smoking a cigar, and breaks ranks to take the bouquet of a middle-aged woman, who holds the flowers out with her left hand and bows her head so that her face is hidden. Next page an old woman walking along a road, leading a white horse—he is pulling off her home, in a wooden cart half again as high as she—bows her head exactly as far. These are the poor, whom we have with us: in their shoulders there is neither grief nor joy, something more passive than acceptance.

The wet sand is torn by feet, the grass blows by the marsh's edge; here, lost in the flat land, seven soldiers are waiting. They lie looking into the horizon, around the machine-gun they have brought here on a cart; to the cart a dog is harnessed—a spotted medium-sized dog, who stares backward and upward into the eyes of man. *Unorganized Innocence*: *an impossibility,* said Blake; but this was possible; and it vanishes, leaving only this print, beneath the wave that goose-steps into Brussels. Under the spiked enameled helmets, behind moustaches issued with the cheap field-grey, the faces know better than their game; but their officer, wood in his saddle, holds his sabre out like Ney, and stares forward and downward into the camera's lens.

Now the forts of Antwerp, broken into blocks, slide into a moat as bergs break off into the sea; the blocks, metamorphosed into the dead, sprawl naked as grave-mounds in the stalky fields; black crowds, their faces fiery with evening, stumble through the typed bodies nailed in rows outside a post-office; the innocent armies, marching over the meadows to three haystacks, a mill-dam, and a hedge, dig a trench for their dead and vanish there. Over them the machine-guns hammer, like presses, the speeches into a common tongue: the object-language of the Old Man of Laputa; here is the fetishism of one commodity, all the values translated into a piece of meat. A wire-coiled Uhlan,

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pressing to his lips a handkerchief dampened with chlorine, looks timidly into the great blaze of the flame-thrower his supply-sergeant hands to him; the sergeant takes away the haystacks, one by one, the hedge, the mill-dam, and puts in their place the craters of the moon. The winter comes now, flake by flake; the snowflakes or soldiers (it is impossible to distinguish—under the microscope each one is individual) are numbered by accountants, who trace with their fingers, in black trenches filled by the dancing snow, the unlikely figures of the dead. The fingers, wooden with cold, work slowly and at last are still; the last figures, whitening, whitening, vanish into their shining ground.

But before, somewhere else, there is a soldier. He is half-sitting, half-lying against what seems a hillside—but at the bottom, under the grass and weeds and dirt, there are sand-bags. He is dressed all in grey—even his boots are grey, and merge imperceptibly into his face—grey with wrinkles and spots and ragged holes: he has become grey as a snowman is white. He has pushed his grey hand between his grey knees (drawn up a little) as if it were cold; but his dark brown hand is folded under his head, as if he were leaning on it patiently or thoughtfully. Part of his face is dark brown, and the rest has trickles of dark brown like contours on its grey; his nose is the white bill of a goose.

He has been dead for months—that is to say for minutes, for a century; if because of his death his armies have conquered the world, and brought to its peoples food, justice, and art, it has been a good bargain for all of them but him. Underneath his picture there is written, about his life, his death, or his war: *Es war ein Traum.*

It is the dream from which no one wakes.

RANDALL JARRELL

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Stalin and Lenin's Heritage: A Controversy

I. Beat Me, Daddy

DWIGHT MACDONALD

"LENIN'S HEIR"* is an extraordinary article. It is a unique combination of the worst scientific and ethical features of two philosophies generally considered incompatible: pragmatism and Marxism. From the former it takes a worship of What Is which makes any scientific understanding impossible, since it excludes the principle of change, and which destroys the basis for ethical discrimination, since whatever "works" is justified by that very fact. From Marx—or rather from his more doctrinaire followers—Burnham borrows that dogmatic schematism which forces history into a rigid and "inevitable" pattern and that determinism (based in his case on Original Sin rather than economics) which paralyzes the will to resist evil, for what is the use of fighting the inevitable? With unerring instinct, Burnham avoids the useful qualities of these two philosophies: here is neither the pragmatist's scrupulous amassing and interpretation of data, nor the Marxist's understanding of historical change and his social idealism.

Yes, an extraordinary article. And a significant one. (Not its least significance is that it should appear in a magazine with the political and cultural traditions of PARTISAN REVIEW—and that, too, without a word of dissent—in that issue, at least—by the editors.) Significant not as serious political analysis—for as I shall show, it is pretentious, ambiguous, and self-contradictory—but rather because of its author's propagandist talents. In a recent article in *The American Mercury,* Fred Rodell makes the excellent point that Walter Lippmann is popular because he gives his readers the impression that he (and they) are doing some profound thinking, while actually he (and they) are just coasting along in a haze of unfounded assumptions, prejudices, and confusions. James Burnham is the Lippmann

* "Lenin's Heir" by James Burnham (PARTISAN REVIEW, Winter 1945.)

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of the intelligentsia. The analogy extends to his style, which appears to be crystal-clear—until one tries to determine precisely what is being said. "It takes a lot of persistent ploughing through Lippmanniana." writes Rodell, "to make plain how often the smoothness of the Lippmann style masks a muddiness of meaning, or even no meaning at all."

I have done such ploughing before, in a lengthy review of *The Managerial Revolution* in the January-February, 1942, issue of this magazine. There I showed in detail—as did H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills in an equally exhaustive and damning review in *Ethics* for January, 1942—how scientifically shoddy and ethically pernicious that book was. Burnham never replied to either review, as a serious theoretician would have felt called on to do. Indeed, he himself seemed to lose interest in "managerialism" almost as soon as the book was off the press; he has written almost nothing about it since then, hardly referring to it in his second book, and not even using the word in the present article, which is about the foremost "manager" of our times. For, like all his recent political attitudes, "managerialism" was a strictly *ad hoc* theory, designed for the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact, when the two great "managerialisms" were arrayed against the decadent bourgeois-democracies. Its hero was Hitler, then at the summit of his power. When Hitler attacked Russia a few weeks after the book appeared, he made hash of Burnham's theory of the war as a principled struggle between managerialism and capitalism; and when he began to meet reverses after the halcyon 1940-1 period (during which *The Managerial Revolution* was written), Burnham increasingly lost interest in managerialism and its hero. Now that the Red Army is a few miles from Berlin, he unrolls the red carpet of his appreciation before the new conquering hero.

One way of evaluating James Burnham's intellectual career is as a restless quest for a Father, for authority, from Thomas Aquinas to Trotsky to Pareto to Hitler and Stalin. A certain ambivalence has become noticeable in his attitude toward the last two Fathers: he is fascinated by their power and success and repelled by their moral qualities. The attraction and repulsion combine in a masochistic way: "Beat me, daddy, eight to the bar." All this would be of merely biographical interest were it not that Burnham is a clever journalist who is able to communicate his political Father fixations to a large audience. And since there is already today among our intellectuals a strong tendency to submit to authority, Burnham's personal values have become somewhat of a public menace.

Now what I want to do here is to show, first, that Burnham's parade of scientific method is so much hocus-pocus, concealing super-

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ficiality of data, sloppiness of terminology and analysis, and special-pleading; and, second, that his exclusion of ethical values from the "real" world leads to a prostration before authoritarian ideologies like fascism and Stalinism which is especially dangerous in a period like this one.

1.

I have just spent a delightful half-hour skimming through the pages of *The Managerial Revolution*. What Olympian certainty, what grand formulations, what a parade of scientific objectivity—and what predictions! P. 178, for instance: "I have predicted the division of the world among three super-states. The nuclei of these three super-states are, whatever may be their future names, the previously existing nations Japan, Germany and the United States." Or p. 224, where he doubts that "the present regime in Russia will long continue" because, mainly, "the Russian managers, the new ruling class, are qualitatively weak." He goes into some detail about the stupidity and incompetence of the Stalinist bureaucracy—of course, this was before the Red Army's advance had converted Stalin retroactively into a Great Man—and predicts that "during the course of the next years, Russia will split apart into an Eastern and a Western section," with Japan taking over the East and Germany the West. "We may be sure," he concludes with that certainty he always has on tap, "We may be sure that the completion of the fusion [of Western Russia with Europe] . . . will find Russia subordinated to the European center, not, as the spinners of Bolshevik nightmares tell us, the other way around." In three years all these grand ideas have had to be quietly dropped overboard; but there's no cause for alarm: Burnham has a new theoretical coat, made by turning the old one inside out.

Burnham is a prophet who cannot predict the future but is very good at predicting the past. A careful study of the *New York Times* has convinced him that the Red Army has made big advances in the past year and half and that Russia is dominating the international scene. He therefore announces his scientific conclusion: Stalin is a Great Man. Why? Because he is successful. Why is he successful? Clearly because he has all the attributes of a Great Man. As far as Burnham can see, the tide of Stalinism is destined to continue its present flood until it engulfs the world—just as in 1941-2, when Hitlerism was at its peak, Burnham predicted its "inevitable" continuance on an upward course. As the pragmatist is likely to do, Burnham predicts the future by simply extending the present forward; and he

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evaluates the past by extending the present backward. Thus Stalin, it appears, has always been a Great Man—Burnham gracefully acknowledges that he discovered Stalin's immanent greatness "rather late in the day"—because he is now successful. If the Red Army had continued to retreat instead of being able to take the offensive; or if, in future, Russia's onward course is checked (for even Great Men sometimes fail, *vide* Hitler), then Burnham will once more have to reinterpret the past. The similarity of this kind of thinking to Stalinist history-writing is obvious.

That Trotsky underestimated Stalin and that he did not understand the historical nature of Stalinism—here I am in agreement with Burnham. But if I had to choose between Trotsky's estimate of Stalin and Burnham's, I should choose the former as closer to the truth. Aside from the banquets and frame-ups, Burnham gives two main reasons for thinking that Stalin is a Great Man on the scale of Lenin:

(1) His "geopolitical vision," which is described in so flimsy and pretentious a paragraph that it is hard to believe Burnham wrote it for a presumably sophisticated audience. This "geopolitical vision" resides, first, in the fact that Russia is Mackinder's "heartland" (but I think God, not Stalin, should get the credit for that), and, second, in the equally indubitable fact that Russia is now extending her power in all directions. (Again the logical merry-go-round: Stalin is a genius because Russia is powerful, and the fact that Russia is powerful proves his genius.)

(2) The alleged theory of "multi-national Bolshevism" which is said—with Burnham's usual scientific caution—to rank with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and Marx's theory of the state. On definition, this simmers down to the use of indigenous political movements inside various countries to further the imperialistic interests of Russia. It is thus not a theory but a tactic. And even as a tactic, it has been standard practice at least since the Peloponnesian War (see Thucydides on the siege of Megara for a specially striking example). But perhaps the novelty is the use of *Bolshevist* parties for such work? The point, however, is precisely that the various Communist movements are *not* Bolshevik by any reasonable definition. In which of all the countries Burnham mentions—from China to Greece and the USA—can he show us a C.P. which aims even at collectivized economy, let alone the workingclass socialism which the Bolshevists tried to realize? Of course, by *his* definition of Bolshevism, which reduces it to a simple conspiracy to seize power, he can show Bolshevism everywhere. But then if he uses *his* definition, he has no right to praise Stalin for the "theory of multi-national Bolshevism,"

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since if Bolshevism is conceived of as simply a power-grabbing technique and is stripped of its international socialist program, then there is nothing very wonderful in "reconciling" it with nationalism.

2.

So far I have confined myself to the first two-thirds of "Lenin's Heir." It is difficult to say exactly what Burnham is "getting at" in these pages. Stalin exists, he says, he is powerful and successful, therefore we must accept him. In what sense "accept" him? As part of the real world—and right now a very important part? It hardly requires an article to prove that, and yet that seems to be all that Burnham is saying if we read him only on the rational level. Scientifically, his article would seem to be one big platitude (with all sorts of illogical and self-contradictory sideshows, some of which we have just analyzed).

But Burnham is saying a lot more than that; in fact, the "point" of his article is not at all in its scientific-rational part but in its moral evaluations of Stalinism and its opponents. Here we confront a fresh set of ambiguities. Now ambiguity may be effectively used in literature, as Henry James shows us, but it is rarely a virtue in political analysis. There are at least three mutually contradictory "readings" that may be made of "Lenin's Heir." It can be read as an anti-Stalinist article; it can be read as a lefthanded apology for Stalinism, designed to paralyze all opposition by suggesting that Stalin's world triumph is inevitable; or it can be read as an ironic, even quasi-anarchistic, debunking of the whole concept of great men and power politics (for are they not presented as morally repugnant?). It can be read in all three ways because Burnham has all three attitudes at once: he wants to fight against Stalinism, he wants to submit to it, and he wants to complain about it. All three attitudes exist, but it is my opinion that the second is the one which subjectively motivated Burnham to write the article and which is conveyed to the reader most strongly and consistently by the article.

The clue seems to me to reside in the final section, in which Burnham argues the thesis that gives him his title: that Stalinism is the direct and organic continuation of Bolshevism. This section appears at first glance to be irrelevant to the main theme and tacked on almost as an afterthought. For whether Stalin is a Burnhamian "Great Man" and whether he is Lenin's heir are separate questions. But one notices that *for Burnham they are not separate*: "As Stalin expands in size before us, we can more readily grant his legitimate succession." Thus if a man is robbed by his partner, the latter be-

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comes the former's legitimate successor—provided he gets away with it, of course.

But there is more than Philistine success-worship here. There is a strongly-felt necessity to present the triumph of Stalinism as historically inevitable *under any circumstances,* and thus a phenomenon which it is not only not dishonorable to yield to but even ridiculous to oppose. "There is not any longer the slightest reason to believe that the development of communism in power could be expected to take any course differing except in lesser details from what it has in fact taken in Russia." (Note the usual over-emphasis—"not the slightest"; and why "not any longer"? Here is another merry-go-round: Russian communism *had* to turn out as it has because it now can be seen to have "in fact" turned out as it has.) Even if the "revolutionary regime" had been able to spread to Germany in 1922-33 (I take "1932-33" in the text as a misprint, since the other references hereabouts are to the earlier period and since even Burnham would not have the heart to call 1933 Stalinism a "revolutionary regime"—or would he? Alas, another ambiguity)—even this would have changed nothing. To state that the extension of communism in the early years of the Russian revolution to the most powerful and industrially advanced nation in Europe would not have altered the later course of that revolution "except in lesser details"—here is an almost theological determinism. Revolutions *must* always turn into their opposite, regardless of any temporal, earthly or merely historical circumstances. Why must they? The only answer is that human nature is intrinsically evil ("love of power", etc.) and the only ultimate basis for a concept of human nature as having innate and unchanging qualities apart from all historical and social conditioning is . . . the theological concept of Original Sin.

This final section is necessary to the strategy of the article, is in fact the crucial "point." For if Stalin has fate on his side, if Stalinism is inevitable, then (a) Burnham is morally justified in coming to terms with it, and (b) those who are fighting and have fought against it in the name of a social ideal can be dismissed as just plain silly. Trotsky thus becomes a literary romantic, as against the serious Bolshevist Stalin; and Burnham's animus is directed against the defeated revolutionary with whose moral values he agrees, while his enthusiastic admiration is reserved for the successful butcher of revolution, whose morality appalls him. For Burnham simply cannot conceive a political leader taking his program seriously, any more than he can imagine an individual acting in accordance with his personal values. (I can quite understand his terming my own attitude

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"sentimental," by which he apparently means that I refuse to give up the ideals of socialism because they are at the moment defeated. How I can be thought a "dilettante," especially by Burham, is not so clear, since I am a specialist in politics and devote all my time to editing a trade journal in that field.) Values to him are idle fancies, pleasant to mull over before the fire, but with no connection with the "real" world. His own tastes are humane and cultivated, but he would not dream of being so unsophisticated as to relate them to his behavior in the "real" world. This latter is a dismal universe, shaped neither by historical-materialist forces nor by the conscious will and choice of men but by some kind of idealistic (in the philosophical sense) and ultimately otherworldly Plan. This Plan manifests itself in the actual course of events, which could not be otherwise, and which, in Burnham's circular-logical fashion, becomes the proof of the existence of the Plan. In such a universe, values (which are what one *wants* to happen) have no relevance to what actually does happen. They are, as Molotov once remarked of fascism, "a matter of taste," of personal and minor interest only, like whether one prefers pipes or cigarettes, or doesn't smoke at all. Burnham, personally, doesn't smoke, but if Stalin says, "Do you mind?" he replies, "Not at all."

If Hitler, Stalin or some native fuhrer could choose what moral and psychological attitude they would most want to inculcate into our intelligentsia, I think it would be the one described above. The intellectual who becomes really enthusiasistic and morally convinced about totalitarianism is likely to be troublesome and awkward because of his very fervor; what the fuhrers want is submission, obedience and a philosophy which leads intellectuals (always a troublesome lot in a totalitarian system) to adopt a humble, masochistic attitude. Beat me, daddy . . . I detected the same note in Arthur Koestler's "The Intelligentsia" in the Summer, 1944, PARTISAN REVIEW, expressed in somewhat more coherent and less morally offensive terms, but essentially the same. In that article, Koestler—to show what a lot of footling neurotics the revolutionary intelligentsia have been—writes contemptuously that Trotsky "at a certain period spent all his afternoons and evenings playing chess at the Cafe Centrale in Vienna." This reminds me of the comment of the Viennese Chief of Police in 1917 when some one warned him that a revolution was likely to break out in Russia. "A revolution! And who will lead it? I suppose Mr. Trotsky of the Centrale!"

The Burnhams, the Koestlers, and the police chiefs of this world have never, never been able to understand how Mr. Trotsky of the Centrale came to lead a revolution.

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II. Politics for the Nursery Set

JAMES BURNHAM

THE editors of PARTISAN REVIEW have been kind enough to offer me a number of pages in which to comment upon Dwight Macdonald's essay. I do not think, however, that it would be justifiable for me to take full advantage of their kindness.

Macdonald, in the present leap of his somewhat jerky career, is busily occupied with the defense of a program of revolution in one psyche. To this program I have no objection; and in it I have no interest. It provides Macdonald himself with that glow of self-righteousness which seems to be his most compelling need. The lurid rhetoric in which the program is expressed gives an outlet less dangerous than available alternatives to the frustrations of his readers.

And the program has the culminating perfection of being precluded from any possibility of influencing actual political events. This is carefully guaranteed not only by its lack of connection with historical reality, but by its own overt prescriptions. The program, calling solely for loud talk, prohibits any political action whatever—no party, group, or league, all being impure, shall be allowed to wear the Macdonald cockade. A year or two of slumming in real politics convinced Macdonald apparently, as it did all of those who observed him at first hand, that his talents and taste lay elsewhere.

His present program, incorporating the lesson, is the political analogue of the program of that cautious mother whom we all came to know in nursery days: hang your bourgeois clothes (rather untidily) on a convenient theoretical limb; exhibit yourself on the bank of the revolutionary river; but never, never go near the water. Thumb your nose, and jeer at the grownups, but remember it's all in fun, really. In short: spoiled-child politics.

So, like a spoiled child, Macdonald whines because I have called him a "sentimental dilettante" in politics. (The spoiled child is naughty in order to attract attention, but always complains when the attention turns out to be unflattering.) He protests that he cannot be a political dilettante because he devotes all his time to editing what he coyly refers to as a "trade journal in that field." This is comparable to his reply, in his magazine, to a critic of his views on popular culture: "I go to the movies often; I read detective stories; I was simply enchanted by the New York World's Fair . . . ; I think Bob Hope, Red Skelton and Jimmy Durante are very funny; I enjoy several comic strips—Moon Mullins, Krazy Kat. and above all Segar's Thimble Theatre, starring Wimpy and Popeye."

Macdonald never has been able to understand what it means to *think politically*. Since he interprets all things only in reference to his own personal predicament, he cannot grasp the fact that when I, and

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others who think politically, use in a political article a phrase like "sentimental dilettante," it is not in the least a personal but solely a *political* characterization. Macdonald, as a political being, is sentimental because his feelings have no plausible correlation with facts, because he mistakes his personal feelings for reality. He is a dilettante in politics not because of the way he allots his time—dilettantes are notorious for spending all their time on 18th Century snuff boxes or Esquimaux dolls or whatever their hobby may be—but because his politics are a pastime, a plaything; they are not serious. They are not serious because they are irresponsible, because they do not face either the logical or the practical consequences of what they pretend to be saying. Macdonald's program shouts for revolution without revolutionary parties; Trotsky without Trotskyism; Bolshevism without Bolshevik organization; the causes of totalitarianism without the totalitarian result; the name of Marx without Marx's doctrines. Again, the spoiled child: he wants the candy without the stomachache, the thrills without the costs.

During one of the faction disputes not long before his death, Trotsky wrote in passing: "Every man has a natural right to be stupid; but Dwight Macdonald abuses the privilege." I have a more tolerant conception of democratic rights than Trotsky's, but I can see his point. Macdonald is ignorant. What is one to do with a chap who writes that pragmatism worships "What Is" and "excludes the principle of change"; who does not know the difference between the concepts of inevitability and probability; who thinks that multi-national Bolshevism is no more than a normal imperialist tactic that has been standard since the Peloponnesian War; who is so unaware even of elementary logic that he believes *three* propositions can be "mutually contradictory"?

I feel justified in undertaking political discussion only if my opponent has either political influence or theoretical competence; failing both of these, it is mere self-indulgence. In Macdonald's case, there is the additional difficulty, for me, that I do not have the remotest idea what of my views he objects to. I gather, of course, that he objects to *me;* but that is a matter I presume to be of no public concern.

As to my views, however, they have in the first place no resemblance, in even a single case, to those opinions he here attributes to me. And, in the second, I have never found in Macdonald's own writings of the past ten or twelve years any intelligible and distinctive views, differing from the commonplaces of radical tradition, except those which he has taken over, with verbal refurbishing, from me. Without going back to the early political lessons in the days when he was sharpening his revolutionary spurs in Henry Luce's office, or his brief, belated swing through the Trotskyist circuit, and quite apart from his subsequent borrowing of the two decisive conclusions—the estimate of the Soviet state and the theory of the managerial revolution (called by Macdonald, "bureaucratic collectivism")—even in this present article he pauses for a parenthetical

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acceptance of the main direct theses of "Lenin's Heir": "That Trotsky underestimated Stalin and that he did not understand the historical nature of Stalinism—here I am in agreement with Burnham." Macdonald is like the wife in Boccaccio who pops her young lover into a chest just as her husband makes a surprise re-entry; and then, sitting on the lid of the chest, launches for her good spouse's ears a blistering denunciation of the neighbor wife's infidelities.

Macdonald vastly over-rates my public role when he joins *New Masses* in warning against me as "dangerous" and a "public menace." I confess that, in politics, he on his side has always seemed to me not at all a menace, but a joke.

III. The Lions and the Foxes

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

JAMES BURNHAM'S drastic revaluation of Stalin's person and place in history seems to have outraged most orthodox Marxists and people committed to some rigid doctrine of revolutionary change. They resent not only what they consider Burnham's inflation of Stalin's stature, but, even more, his dismissal of the socialist idea as a tragic and Utopian dream. And Macdonald's heated rejoinder to Burnham in this issue may be taken as representing the reaction of those radicals who will brook no revision of the moral and political postulates of the revolutionary tradition.

Thus in the pieces by Burnham and Macdonald we see two protagonists of the extreme. Burnham presents himself as the sceptic, pessimist, debunker of illusions; Macdonald as the man of faith, optimism, social virtue. The drama inherent in any such clash of absolutes cannot be overlooked, and it must be said that both Burnham and Macdonald have used to the full the rhetorical possibilities of the situation. Unfortunately, however, for those of us who are seriously concerned with the fate of socialism in our time, the polemical strategies employed on both sides have practically obscured the real issues underlying the controversy. For one thing, Burnham has clothed his scepticism in the somber tones of "reality," while Macdonald

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tries to put over his political faith with a great show of moral righteousness which he often substitutes for analysis. In addition, as I shall show later, Macdonald is remarkably adroit at side-stepping the problems raised by Burnham—or, for that matter, by the events of the last few decades. All of which makes it only more difficult to come to grips with these problems.

1.

Let us begin with Burnham's argument. It consists of two main points distinct in themselves but formally and rather arbitrarily tied together by Burnham: namely, that Stalin is a "great man" and not the mediocrity and supreme ward-heeler of the left painted by Trotsky, and that there is no real historic break between Leninism—or Marxism— and Stalinism. Burnham's other observations, which seem to make such neat targets for Macdonald's moral artillery, are largely subsidiary to Burnham's premises and conclusions. If they offend one's radical sensibilities, still the question remains whether they are true or not—and that brings us right back to Burnham's basic argument.

On the question of Stalin's capacities I find nothing "menacing" in Burnham's pointing to the discrepancy between Stalin's undeniable achievements and a certain boldness, or at least, ruthlessness, of action, and Trotsky's image of Stalin, still accepted in most left-wing circles, as a dim-visioned, plodding, over-cautious, petty schemer: the "outstanding mediocrity in the party." I do not propose to go into the question of just how "great" a man Stalin is, which seems to have intrigued Macdonald and others, for it can lead only to endless quibbles, involving prior definitions of "greatness." True enough, Burnham seems to have overstated his case, but, here too, it is his *case* that we are primarily concerned with and not with any gratuitous psychological speculations about Burnham's *motives* or compulsions. The fact is, to return to the question of Stalin's political leadership, it has become more and more obvious in the last years that the standard conception of Stalin and his regime could not account for its "successes." In this respect, I am inclined to go even further than Burnham in reexamining the question. We must, at this point, ask ourselves why so many predictions and revolutionary expectations of the left opposition to Stalin have been belied by history: why, for example, many of us expected a disaffection of the Soviet people, especially during the strain of a major war; why we did not count on Russian industry or the Red Army standing up as

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well as it did to the might of the Reichswehr backed by the industrial plant of Western Europe. The reason, it is now clear, is that we were taught by Trotsky that the new Soviet bureaucracy, sapped of all revolutionary energy and intent only on preserving its own power, acted as a brake on the productive forces of a socialist society, and that the bureaucratic jockeying for power and privilege, personified in the primitive Machiavellism of Stalin, stamped out the initiative and creative force of the Russian people. Yes, we were wrong; and though we still have not arrived at a satisfying analysis of the Soviet regime, one thing is sure: that as we revise our estimate of the bureaucracy we must retouch the portrait of its leader. So, too, on the plane of international politics, while we need not go along with Burnham in presenting a certificate of "greatness" to Stalin for every one of his moves and turns, nevertheless it is plain that Stalin lately has been throwing around his political weight—in his dealings with Roosevelt and Churchill as well as his high-handed policies in eastern Europe— in a way that scarcely suggests the back-stage maneuverer.

Thus, as a nationalist figure, as a figure representing and directing the combined interests of the bureaucracy and the nation, Stalin takes on a new dimension. And it may well be that history will place him on a par with Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Frederick, Bismarck and other heroes. But having said this, we have covered only half the question, for to understand fully the role of any such person as Stalin it is also necessary to measure him against the historic tasks placed before him. Winston Churchill, for example, is certainly a gifted and really important "mediocrity": there is no denying his large accomplishment in keeping intact the British Empire through the darkest days in its history; but what a pigmy he would be if he had the mission of carrying out one of the great humanist or intellectual traditions of the modern world. Stalin, on the other hand, must be seen as the "heir" of the Marxist movement and of the first successful socialist revolution—and look what he has done with its theoretical scope, its human aims, its moral grandeur. One need hardly labor the point that, whatever political stand we take on the present Soviet regime, neither its theory nor its practice has anything to do with the spirit of socialism. And it is clear that only a "great" villain could have so perverted and debased the Marxist doctrines, reducing them to a set of crude rationalizations for purely Russian power policies—policies that have led to the crushing of every genuine socialist movement throughout Europe. Hence Burnham only confuses the issue by puffing up these policies—or tactics—into the so-called theory of "multi-national bolshevism" and what he calls

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Stalin's "geopolitical vision," for these are really over-elaborate metaphors for Stalin's familiar strategy of using radical and liberal ideology outside of Russia to promote or to conceal Russian interests. If Stalin's style is adequate, as Burnham says, to his purposes, it is only because his multi-national scheming and demagogic simplifications do not require the intellectual power and range found in all great Marxist leaders.

I am, of course, saying that Stalin is *not* Lenin's heir, not, at least, in the sense that we can establish a political continuity between the two figures; and I am aware that Burnham is not disposed to see Stalin as a "mediocrity" in terms of the socialist tradition because of his belief that Stalin did not "betray the revolution." Yet I cannot see any semblance of proof. At one point, Burnham simply identifies size with succession: "As Stalin expands in size before us, we can more readily grant his legitimate succession." At another, he asserts that the seeds of the Stalinist "terror" and "political monopoly" were to be found in Lenin: a specious argument, based on the common genetic fallacy, for the seeds of any number of things can be found in the most disparate phenomena: the seeds of Calvinism in early bourgeois enterprise, the seeds of fascism in socialism, of socialism in capitalism, of art in neurosis. . . . The fact is, that the total politics of Lenin were geared to a different conception and order of humanity from those of Stalin. Burnham's cardinal point, however, is that no matter how grandiose or beneficent the original principles of Marx or Lenin or Trotsky may have been, the iron "law of revolutions" soon grinds them into the mire of tyranny and misery for the great masses of people. But from where, we must ask, has Burnham conjured up this revolutionary law? Either he is generalizing on the single Russian experience, in which case he is merely ignoring Trotsky's theory that socialism cannot be built in an economy of scarcity, which I have never seen refuted. (Suppose a Leninist policy had socialized the industrial plant of Germany?) Or Burnham must fall back on some doctrine of human nature as intrinsically evil, as in Pareto, Mosca—and Machiavelli.

So much for Burnham's specific arguments. If we look at his position as a whole, however, the question arises just what Burnham's historical perspective is, or from what historical position or values he makes his analyses. On the surface, Burnham creates the impression that he is making a cold study of the facts. Yet we know that history does not permit any such "scientific" luxuries; and on closer examination we discover that Burnham sees history as a series of *coups d'etat* by the strong and the unprincipled who do not hesitate to use

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the deepest moral urges and liberating doctrines of humanity as strategies of enslavement. No wonder that for Burnham Stalin's "greatness" not only becomes indistinguishable from that of Marx or Lenin, but also acquires a historic finality that reduces all radical opposition to Stalin to sheer day-dreaming.

2.

When we come to Macdonald's piece, we move into another realm, a realm of socialist piety, rectitude and evangelism. If Burnham sees the political foxes at the helm of history, Macdonald puts his faith in the revolutionary lions. And it cannot be denied that Macdonald's values are more attractive—and more consoling.

But Macdonald's position is more of a moral stance than the result of a political analysis—a kind of inspirational propaganda that might be valuable for sustaining revolutionary enthusiasm in a period when a Marxist movement is flourishing and there is widespread agreement on its basic doctrines. At the present time, however, when the left is reeling from defeats and confusions, it seems to me to be politically irresponsible to substitute revolutionary pep-talks, as Macdonald does, for the task of reconciling the great promise of the socialist movement with its uninterrupted failure. What Macdonald has mostly been doing in the last years has been to push the millenium ahead: each time the socialist movement is crushed or fails to show its head, Macdonald blames the capitalists, the Stalinists, or the social democrats, or the liberals, assuring us that the revolution will materialize in the next crisis. The effect of such an attitude cannot be other than to lull to sleep those who already believe that socialism is just around the corner, and to make the socialist belief utterly Utopian and not a little ridiculous to those who are not convinced of its imminence.

Thus Macdonald's article is not much more than an attempt to "show up" Burnham from the standpoint of revolutionary socialism. Not that I disagree with much that Macdonald says, but what he says is largely a reiteration of the time-worn truths of socialist theory. This, of course, is not an uncommon procedure in radical polemics, but in Macdonald's case his lively journalism serves to conceal the lack of political content. What, for example, is the content of his reply to Burnham? Macdonald points to some contradictions in Burnham's argument (and introduces a few of his own); he throws his entire arsenal of abuse at Burnham; and he assures us, once more, of his own revolutionary ardor. But most of the larger issues are evaded:

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he admits casually that "Trotsky underestimated Stalin and that he did not understand the historical nature of Stalinism," but he immediately drops this question, which is after all, one of the chief points in Burnham's article, by implying that he prefers Trotsky's errors to Burnham's; he exhumes Burnham's false predictions as though his own record in the matter of predictions were spotless; and he glosses over the rather interesting fact that he shares some of Burnham's basic theories, especially on the nature of the Russian and German bureaucracy. And throughout his piece is the implicit assumption that socialism is coming soon, that its theory and practice are basically sound—all we need is a little patience.

Before going into these questions, however, I should like to comment briefly on some relatively minor aberrations:

1. Macdonald's references to the philosophy of pragmatism are shockingly misinformed, stemming apparently from the vulgarized notion that pragmatists believe everything that "works" is true. Nor does pragmatism exclude the principle of *change*. The pragmatic theory of knowledge is perhaps best stated in Dewey's concept of "operational consequences," according to which the meaning and validity of ideas are to be understood in terms of their relevant theoretical and practical effects.

2. The suggestion that Burnham's politics are to be explained—or rather, explained away—by some father urge is question-begging, and dangerous besides. How many times have I heard Lenin's revolutionary activities reduced to a need to avenge his brother's execution! Also, it might be noted that the great doctrine of psychoanalysis was not intended either by Freud or his legitimate followers as a method of *exposing* people, but rather as a means of illuminating certain areas of experience.

3. Macdonald makes some fuss over the fact that Burnham's piece appeared in PARTISAN REVIEW without an editorial comment *in the same issue*. Surely Macdonald cannot be so insecure in his position as to fear that all might be lost if our dissent appeared some months later! It must be that Macdonald has not gotten over the old sectarian practice of party organs, which dictated that when a piece disagreeing with the "editorial line" was published, the editors must immediately warn their readers to pay no attention to it and explain that it was printed only for decorative purposes.

I said earlier that Macdonald disposed of Trotsky's underestimation of Stalin by suggesting that he preferred Trotsky's errors to Burnham's. Actually, this is not true, for Macdonald patently prefers those of Burnham. On innumerable occasions Macdonald has challenged

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Trotsky's conception of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state in which the Stalinist bureaucracy had not yet become a bona-fide class. And Macdonald's own notion of bureaucratic collectivism as a new class society—in both Russia and Germany—differs only on a few minor points—and mostly verbally—from Burnham's theory of the managerial revolution. Of the two, however, Burnham is the more consistent. For he realizes that a new class structure cannot be a momentary spasm in history, and that it is in contradiction with the classic Marxist idea of socialism evolving out of capitalism. Macdonald, on the other hand, goes right on applying the old socialist formulas to all political situations without any serious effort to reconcile them with the "new order" already established in Germany and Russia and just sprouting in the United States and England. After all, if German fascism, as Macdonald has claimed, is a new system that has superseded and abolished the contradictions of capitalism, then the bottom drops out of the case for socialism. For the belief in socialism is grounded in the theory that capitalism cannot solve its economic contradictions and that *only socialism* can do so; in this sense the idea of socialism is rooted in the movement of history and becomes realizable through objective social forces. Given Macdonld's version of an alternative "new order," however, socialism becomes simply a matter of moral preference. True enough, Macdonald—like Burnham—has not been playing up lately his doctrine of bureaucratic collectivism, which would suggest his realizing that it has been outmoded by events: but I do not recall having seen any public repudiation of it.

In general, though Macdonald never hesitates to belabor others—his favorite whipping boy is the liberal intellectual—for their political mistakes, he seems to be stricken with amnesia when it comes to his own errors. Look at just a few of the predictions and political estimates he has tossed off in the last few years. In his "10 Propositions" (July, 1941) Macdonald stated flatly that the United States and England could not win the war because of Germany's superior political and economic organization: "By now the social system of Roosevelt and Churchill is so incompetent to plan large-scale production whether for war or peace, so lacking in appeal to the masses . . ." "The British and American bourgeoisie, tied to a system of private property hopelessly archaic vis-a-vis the economic demands of modern warfare, are unable to organize production efficiently enough to win their own imperialist war." In the same piece Macdonald insisted that the pursuit of the war under the existing social system can lead only to fascism, whether through victory or defeat: "The alternatives

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the 'lesser evil' policy of supporting Roosevelt-Churchill presents are: military defeat, owing to the superiority of fascism in total warfare; or victory under a fascist system of our own." Aside from the perspicacity of these observations, one cannot help noting that throughout Macdonald's prophesies of the collapse—or fascization—of democratic capitalism there runs an unseemly respect for the prowess of Hitler and his order, the very thing Macdonald now throws up to Burnham. "Hitler's advanced methods of waging war," wrote Macdonald, "reflect his advanced politics—advanced in the sense that they manifest a greater awareness of the present state of the world and a more serious resolution to meet its problems than shown by the bourgeoisie." ("10 Propositions.")

Then, too, there are Macdonald's periodic discoveries, too numerous to quote, of "revolutionary situations" on the continent, in England, even in the United States. One need hardly comment on the wishful-thinking thus exhibited by Macdonald. But even if we grant that on all these occasions everything was ripe for the ushering in of socialism, the question arises: why the unbroken series of failures and defeats? Nor is it enough to invoke those ever-handy scapegoats: the workers were not stripped of their illusions, the power of the bourgeoisie was too strong, the Stalinists (or other compromising groups) misled the working class. For the next question is: what reason is there to believe that these formidable obstacles to any socialist bid for power will not continue to exist? Or, we must ask too, what modifications have been made in socialist theory and strategy to insure greater success in the future? Obviously none. Take the present situation in Europe. One would think that Macdonald's "revolutionary optimism" would be tempered somewhat by the fact that militant socialists play a minor role in the resistance movements, that everywhere they face Allied guns and local governments not disposed to yield without a fight, and, most important of all, they face the Stalinists, who, by their combined power and prestige have so far been able either to capture or smash any genuine trend toward socialism.

The fact is that the development of Stalinism has brought a new factor for Marxists to cope with, not envisioned by the classic Leninist strategy. Lenin's bolshevik tactics were evolved in a backward country, where the overwhelming masses of people were opposed to the rotting regime, and were not daily persuaded of its benefits by a streamlined press, radio, cinema, etc. The problem for Lenin, therefore, was to maintain the revolutionary integrity of the party with the expectation that in a moment of crisis the people would naturally gravitate toward it. To prevent their stopping at some middle-of-the

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road position, like that represented by Kerensky, Lenin devised the stratagem of the "united front," which was simply an alliance made by communists with other working-class groups to defend their immediate interests against a common enemy and to "expose" the limited aims of these other groups. In this way, Lenin and his followers hoped to keep intact the unity and striking power of the proletariat. Now, obviously, these conditions no longer exist in western Europe. And Stalinism cannot be said to keep its hold on the masses simply because of a moderate left policy. On the contrary, its influence is due to its seeming monopoly on the memories of the Russian revolution and, at the same time, its ability to attract other sections of the population on a non-revolutionary basis. Or, to put it in another way, the degeneration of the Russian regime has paralyzed the will to socialism outside of Russia.

Yet nowhere has Macdonald tried seriously to grapple with the problem of detaching the peoples of Europe from the Stalinist mythology—especially in those countries now occupied by Russia. In his report on Greece (see *Politics*) and in other writings he has casually suggested some sort of "united front" with Stalinism. But who is to make this united front?—a few isolated individuals and small groups scattered throughout the world? Perhaps Macdonald, in New York, with the Greek Communists?—or with the Red Army? Even if all this made any practical sense, still it would become theoretically meaningless, according to Macdonald's conception of bureaucratic collectivism in Russia, for socialists to effect a united front with a new class building a new order, not socialist.

Lest I be misunderstood, I should like to emphasize that I am not trying to counterpose an attitude of pessimism to Macdonald's optimism. All I am saying is that no one seems to know the answers to these questions posed by new and unforeseen political developments; and I cannot see how the cause of socialism is helped the least bit by Macdonald's fostering the illusion that he possesses most of the answers. Or by his optimism, the only real content of which is an evasion of the problems raised by the present predicament of the left. The primary task of socialists is to find the causes of this predicament, to rethink their position in terms of the present political situation, instead of indulging in the psychological game of measuring each other's optimism or pessimism. Only in this way can we salvage from the overwhelming realities of history the positive ethos of socialism as a morality as well as an economy.

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T. S. Eliot as the International Hero

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

A CULTURE HERO is one who brings new arts and skills to mankind. Prometheus was a culture hero and the inventors of the radio may also be said to be culture heroes, although this is hardly to be confounded with the culture made available by the radio.

The inventors of the radio made possible a new range of experience. This is true of certain authors; for example, it is true of Wordsworth in regard to nature, and Proust in regard to time. It is not true of Shakespeare, but by contrast it is true of Surrey and the early Elizabethan playwrights who invented blank verse. Thus the most important authors are not always culture heroes, and thus no rank, stature, or scope is of necessity implicit in speaking of the author as a culture hero.

When we speak of nature and of a new range of experience, we may think of a mountain range: some may make the vehicles by means of which a mountain is climbed, some may climb the mountain, and some may apprehend the new view of the surrounding countryside which becomes possible from the heights of the mountain. T. S. Eliot is a culture hero in each of these three ways. This becomes clear when we study the relationship of his work to the possible experiences of modern life. The term, possible, should be kept in mind, for many human beings obviously disregard and turn their backs upon much of modern life, although modern life does not in the least cease to circumscribe and penetrate their existence.

The reader of T. S. Eliot by turning the dials of his radio can hear the capitals of the world, London, Vienna, Athens, Alexandria, Jerusalem. What he hears will be news of the agony of war. Both the agony and the width of this experience are vivid examples of how the poetry of T. S. Eliot has a direct relationship to modern life. The width and the height and the depth of modern life are exhibited in his poetry; the agony and the horror of modern life are represented as inevitable to any human being who does not wish to deceive himself with systematic lies. Thus it is truly significant that E. M. Forster, in writing of Eliot, should recall August 1914 and the beginning of

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the First World War; it is just as significant that he should speak of first reading Eliot's poems in Alexandria, Egypt, during that war, and that he should conclude by saying that Eliot was one who had looked into the abyss and refused henceforward to deny or forget the fact.

We are given an early view of the international hero in the quasi-autobiographical poem which Eliot entitles: "Mélange Adultère Du Tout." The title, borrowed from a poem by Corbière, is ironic, but the adulterous mixture of practically everything, every time and every place, is not ironic in the least: a teacher in America, the poem goes, a journalist in England, a lecturer in Yorkshire, a literary nihilist in Paris, overexcited by philosophy in Germany, a wanderer from Omaha to Damascus, he has celebrated, he says, his birthday at an African oasis, dressed in a giraffe's skin. Let us place next to this array another list of names and events as heterogeneous as a circus or America itself: St. Louis, New England, Boston, Harvard, England, Paris, the First World War, Oxford, London, the Russian Revolution, the Church of England, the post-war period, the world crisis and depression, the Munich Pact, and the Second World War. If this list seems far-fetched or forced, if it seems that such a list might be made for any author, the answer is that these names and events are *presences* in Eliot's work in a way which is not true of many authors, good and bad, who have lived through the same years.

Philip Rahv has shown how the heroine of Henry James is best understood as the heiress of all the ages. So, in a further sense, the true protagonist of Eliot's poems is the heir of all the ages. He is the descendant of the essential characters of James in that he is the American who visits Europe with a Baedeker in his hand, just like Isabel Archer. But the further sense in which he is the heir of all the ages is illustrated when Eliot describes the seduction of a typist in a London flat from the point of view of Tiresias, a character in a play by Sophocles. To suppose that this is the mere exhibition of learning or reading is a banal misunderstanding. The important point is that the presence of Tiresias illuminates the seduction of the typist just as much as a description of her room. Hence Eliot writes in his notes to *The Waste Land* that "what Tiresias *sees* is the substance of the poem." The illumination of the ages is available at any moment, and when the typist's indifference and boredom in the act of love must be represented, it is possible for Eliot to invoke and paraphrase a lyric from a play by Oliver Goldsmith. Literary allusion has become not merely a Miltonic reference to Greek gods and Old Testament geography, not merely the citation of parallels, but a powerful and

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inevitable habit of mind, a habit which issues in judgment and the representation of different levels of experience, past and present.

James supposed that his theme was the international theme: would it not be more precise to speak of it as the transatlantic theme? This effort at a greater exactness defines what is involved in Eliot's work. Henry James was concerned with the American in Europe. Eliot cannot help but be concerned with the whole world and all history. Tiresias sees the nature of love in all times and all places and when Sweeney outwits a scheming whore, the fate of Agamemnon becomes relevant. So too, in the same way exactly, Eliot must recognize and use a correspondence between St. Augustine and Buddha in speaking of sensuality. And thus, as he writes again in his notes to *The Waste Land,* "The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism as the culmination of this part of the poem is not an accident." And it is not an accident that the international hero should have come from St. Louis, Missouri, or at any rate from America. Only an American with a mind and sensibility which is cosmopolitan and expatriated could have seen Europe as it is seen in *The Waste Land.*

A literary work may be important in many ways, but surely one of the ways in which it is important is in its relationship to some important human interest or need, or in its relationship to some new aspect of human existence. Eliot's work is important in relationship to the fact that experience has become international. We have become an international people, and hence an international hero is possible. Just as the war is international, so the true causes of many of the things in our lives are world-wide, and we are able to understand the character of our lives only when we are aware of all history, of the philosophy of history, of primitive peoples and the Russian Revolution, of ancient Egypt and the unconscious mind. Thus again it is no accident that in *The Waste Land* use is made of *The Golden Bough,* and a book on the quest of the Grail; and the way in which images and associations appear in the poem illustrates a new view of consciousness, the depths of consciousness and the unconscious mind.

The protagonist of *The Waste Land* stands on the banks of the Thames and quotes the Upanishads, and this very quotation, the command to "give, sympathize, and control," makes possible a comprehensive insight into the difficulty of his life in the present. But this emphasis upon one poem of Eliot's may be misleading. What is true of much of his poetry is also true of his criticism. When the critic writes of tradition and the individual talent, when he declares

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the necessity for the author of a consciousness of the past as far back as Homer, when he brings the reader back to Dante, the Elizabethans and Andrew Marvell, he is also speaking as the heir of all the ages.

The emphasis on a consciousness of literature may also be misleading, for nowhere better than in Eliot can we see the difference between being merely literary and making the knowledge of literature an element in vision, that is to say, an essential part of the process of seeing anything and everything. Thus, to cite the advent of Tiresias again, the literary character of his appearance is matched by the unliterary actuality by means of which he refers to himself as being "like a taxi throbbing waiting." In one way, the subject of *The Waste Land* is the sensibility of the protagonist, a sensibility which is literary, philosophical, cosmopolitan and expatriated. But this sensibility is concerned not with itself as such, but with the common things of modern life, with two such important aspects of existence as religious belief and making love. To summon to mind such profound witnesses as Freud and D. H. Lawrence is to remember how often, in modern life, love has been the worst sickness of human beings.

The extent to which Eliot's poetry is directly concerned with love is matched only by the extent to which it is concerned with religious belief and the crisis of moral values. J. Alfred Prufrock is unable to make love to women of his own class and kind because of shyness, self-consciousness, and fear of rejection. The protagonists of other poems in Eliot's first book are men or women laughed at or rejected in love, and a girl deserted by her lover seems like a body deserted by the soul.

In Eliot's second volume of poems, an old man's despair issues in part from his inability to make love, while Sweeney, an antithetical character, is able to make love, but is unable to satisfy the woman with whom he copulates. In *The Waste Land,* the theme of love as a failure is again uppermost. Two lovers return from a garden after a moment of love, and the woman is overcome by despair or pathological despondency. A lady, perhaps the same woman who has returned from the garden in despair, becomes hysterical in her boudoir because her lover or her husband has nothing to say to her and cannot give her life any meaning or interest: "What shall I do now?" she says, "what shall I ever do?" The neurasthenic lady is succeeded in the poem by cockney women who gossip about another cockney woman who has been made ill by contraceptive pills taken to avoid the consequences of love; which is to say that the sickness of love has

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struck down every class in society: "What you get married for, if you don't want children?" And then we witness the seduction of the typist; and then other aspects of the sickness of love appear when, on the Thames bank, three girls ruined by love rehearse the sins of the young men with whom they have been having affairs. In the last part of the poem, the impossibility of love, the gulf between one human being and another, is the answer to the command to give, that is to say, to give oneself or surrender oneself to another human being in the act of making love.

Elsewhere love either results in impotence, or it is merely copulation. In "The Hollow Men," the hollow men are incapable of making love because there is a shadow which falls between the desire and the spasm. The kinship of love and belief is affirmed when the difficulty of love and of religious belief are expressed in the same way and as parallels, by means of a paraphrase and parody of the Lord's Prayer. In "Sweeney Agonistes," Sweeney returns to say that that there is nothing in love but copulation, which, like birth and death, is boring. Sweeney's boredom should be placed in contrast with the experience of Burbank, who encountered the Princess Volupine in Venice, and found himself impotent with her. A comparison ought also to be made between Sweeney and the protagonist of one of Eliot's poems in French who harks back to a childhood experience of love: "I tickled her to make her laugh. I experienced a moment of power and delirium." Eliot's characters when they make love either suffer from what the psychoanalysts term "psychic impotence," or they make love so inadequately that the lady is left either hysterical or indifferent when the episode is over. The characters who are potent and insensitive are placed in contrast with the characters who are impotent and sensitive. Grishkin has a bust which promises pneumatic bliss, while Burbank's kind, the kind of a man who goes to Europe with a Baedeker, has to crawl between the dry ribs of metaphysics because no contact possible to flesh is satisfactory. The potent and the insensitive, such as Sweeney, are not taken in by the ladies, the nightingales and the whores; but Burbank, like Agamemnon, is betrayed and undone.

This synoptic recitation might be increased by many more examples. Its essence is expressed perfectly in "Little Gidding": "Love is the unfamiliar name." But we ought to remember that the difficulty of making love, that is to say, of entering into the most intimate of relationships, is not the beginning but the consequence of the whole character of modern life. That is why the apparatus of reference which the poet brings to bear upon failure in love involves all history

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("And I Tiresias have foresuffered all") and is international. So too the old man who is the protagonist of "Gerontion" must refer to human beings of many nationalities, to Mr. Silvero at Limoges, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist, Fräulein von Kulp and Christ [the tiger] and he finds it necessary to speak of all history as well as his failure in love. History is made to illuminate love and love is made to illuminate history. In modern life, human beings are whirled beyond the circuit of the constellations: their intimate plight is seen in connection or relation with the anguish of the Apostles after Calvary, the murder of Agamemnon, the insanity of Ophelia and children who chant that London bridge is falling down. In the same way, the plight of Prufrock is illuminated by means of a rich, passing reference to Michelangelo, the sculptor of the strong and heroic man. Only when the poet is the heir of all the ages can he make significant use of so many different and distant kinds of experience. But conversely, only when experience becomes international, only when many different and distant kinds of experience are encountered by the poet, does he find it necessary to become the heir of all the ages.

Difficulty in love is inseparable from the deracination and the alienation from which the international man suffers. When the traditional beliefs, sanctions and bonds of the community and of the family decay or disappear in the distance like a receding harbor, then love ceases to be an act which is in relation to the life of the community, and in immediate relation to the family and other human beings. Love becomes purely personal. It is isolated from the past and the future, and since it is isolated from all other relationships, since it is no longer celebrated, evaluated and given a status by the community, love does become merely copulation. The protagonist of "Gerontion" uses one of the most significant phrases in Eliot's work when he speaks of himself as living in a *rented* house; which is to say, not in the house where his forbears lived. He lives in a rented house, he is unable to make love, and he knows that history has many cunning, deceptive, and empty corridors. The nature of the house, of love and of history are interdependent aspects of modern life.

When we compare Eliot's poetry to the poetry of Valèry, Yeats and Rilke, Eliot's direct and comprehensive concern with the essential nature of modern life gains an external definition. Yeats writes of Leda and he writes of the nature of history; Valèry writes of Narcissus and the serpent in the Garden of Eden; Rilke is inspired by great works of art, by Christ's mother and by Orpheus. Yet in

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each of these authors the subject is transformed into a timeless essence. The heritage of Western culture is available to these authors and they use it many beautiful ways; but the fate of Western culture and the historical sense as such does not become an important part of their poetry. And then if we compare Eliot with Auden and with Pound, a further definition becomes clear. In his early work, Auden is inspired by an international crisis in a social and political sense; in his new work, he writes as a teacher and preacher and secular theologian. In neither period is all history and all culture a necessary part of the subject or the sensibility which is dealing with the subject. With Pound, we come closer to Eliot and the closeness sharpens the difference. Pound is an American in Europe too, and Pound, not Eliot, was the first to grasp the historical and international dimension of experience, as we can see in an early effort of his to explain the method of the *Cantos* and the internal structure of each *Canto*: "All times are contemporaneous," he wrote, and in the *Cantos,* he attempts to deal with all history as if it were part of the present. But he fails; he remains for the most part an American in Europe, and the *Cantos* are never more than a book of souvenirs of a tour of the world and a tour of culture.

To be international is to be a citizen of the world and thus a citizen of no particular city. The world as such is not a community and it has no constitution or government: it is the turning world in which the human being, surrounded by the consequences of all times and all places, must live his life as a human being and not as the citizen of any nation. Hence, to be the heir of all the ages is to inherit nothing but a consciousness of how all heirlooms are rooted in the past. Dominated by the historical consciousness, the international hero finds that all beliefs affect the holding of any belief (he cannot think of Christianity without remembering Adonis); he finds that many languages affect each use of speech (*The Waste Land* concludes with a passage in four languages).

When nationalism attempts to renew itself, it can do so only through the throes of war. And when nationalism in America attempts to become articulate, when a poet like Carl Sandburg writes that "The past is a bucket of ashes," or when Henry Ford makes the purely American remark that "History is the bunk," we have only to remember such a pilgrimage as that of Ford in the Peace Ship in which he attempted to bring the First World War to an end in order to see that anyone can say whatever he likes: no matter what anyone says, existence has become international for everyone.

Eliot's political and religious affirmations are at another extreme,

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and they do not resemble Ford's quixotic pilgrimage except as illustrating the starting-point of the modern American, and his inevitable journey to Europe. What should be made explicit here is that only one who has known fully the deracination and alienation inherent in modern life can be moved to make so extreme an effort at returning to the traditional community as Eliot makes in attaching himself to Anglo-Catholicism and Royalism. Coming back may well be the same thing as going away; or at any rate, the effort to return home may exhibit the same predicament and the same topography as the fact of departure. Only by going to Europe, by crossing the Atlantic and living thousands of miles from home, does the international hero conceive of the complex nature of going home.

Modern life may be compared to a foreign country in which a foreign language is spoken. Eliot is the international hero because he has made the journey to the foreign country and described the nature of the new life in the foreign country. Since the future is bound to be international, if it is anything at all, we are all the bankrupt heirs of the ages, and the moments of the crisis expressed in Eliot's work are a prophecy of the crises of our own future in regard to love, religious belief, good and evil, the good life and the nature of the just society. *The Waste Land* will soon be as good as new.

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The Mysteries of Eleusis

ELIZABETH HARDWICK

THE porch of the house appeared unchanged. The steps still sagged and the rotting surface of the wood was covered with many broom scratches. There was the old iron railing partially hidden by vines. The vines were rather thin and without any particular season in their appearance. Over the window of the door there was a square of glass colored in dull hues of red and green and gold. The same gravel and stones separated this house from the one on the right. The neighboring house still retained its threatening liveliness and the dreamer half expected to hear the sounds of its peculiar violence. The terror of home was domestic and rural: quarrels, poverty, abject and countrified dissension. The neighbors knew the city sins of drinking and laughing and falling on the floor and setting fire to the very roof over their heads. The dreamer heard voices behind the door of home and at first thought it was the mother calling out an accusation. Then the sound became the conglomerate voice of the family. There were the voices of a sister, a brother, another sister, this one older, and a mother and father. Unable to bear the excitement of anticipation, the dreamer opened the unlocked door and stepped into a hallway of familiar shape. A ray of sunlight streamed through the door and illuminated a patch of strange wall-paper that startled the dreamer. The paper was like an enormously complex tapestry filled with diminutive human figures, tiny, unrecognizable dogs and flashes of armour set against a background of richly variegated roses. The paper was an alteration of frightening importance that shattered the confidence of the first step on the threshold. It remained as a danger signal even when the dreamer joyously noted an old familiar table, a square, stunted thing of heavy wood. Beside it was an iron coat stand with awkward and ugly hat pegs jutting out from the frame like stiff branches. There were no articles of clothing on the rack, but the stand itself, the beloved old eyesore, reached down into the dreamer's heart. It brought forth recollections of the mother's crude, homemade cotton dresses and her short, overworked hands. And with it appeared the older sister's very stern face not softened by years of

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Sunday school teaching and not calmed by a profound belief in the possibility of salvation. The younger sister's image appeared to the dreamer, the image of a girl who was healthy and real, athletic, a recognizable, warm type. What was there to fear? the dreamer asked, remembering that the mother's eyes were always pink from sewing and crying.

The voices had vanished. The windows were open and a summer breeze blew through the rooms. The dreamer called out and was not answered. Moving more quickly, the exploration of the house began, the sensual rediscovery of *The Place* that was known and remembered as a unit. In the kitchen something boiled on the stove. The odor—was it meat? vegetables? or just the kitchen itself reproducing its own living symbol? There was a soiled oilcloth on the table. The dreamer opened the door of the pantry, remembered the dark, cluttered and crowded room and the feeling of *storage*. Behind the pantry door there should have been rat traps and darkness and mustiness, but, instead, the opening revealed a wide room filled with the sunlight of summer. A room that was comfortable and furnished with articles that went together to make an undistinguished union, like the room of a prostitute. The dreamer was conscious of the possibility of loving the room under different circumstances, though now it was hateful because it was unexpected and alien. Here, in this house, it brought only a sense of danger and fear. Above the silken couch there was an old water-marked picture whose caption said, *Shakespeare and His Friends*. The dreamer rushed toward it, experiencing a complete release from the past fear and a new exaltation. The picture had always been in the house, a proud article the father purchased, or stole, from a junk shop. Its bigness and remote meaning gave a temporary sense of contentment. This is home, the dreamer said, only to turn back to the strange, unremembered room with the city furniture. Fears returned, little by little, like a play unfolding. The room led into another, a bedroom of which one side was reserved for the mother and girls, the other for the father and son. Here the rugless floors were familiar. The iron beds came into view and there was the green dresser with the faded cretonne skirt made during a moment of adolescent yearning toward the attractive. It was a hopelessly clumsy reproduction of the decorations seen in ladies' magazines. The dreamer sighed and then, under the spell of the discovery, began to call out the name of the young sister. Mary Agnes! Mary Agnes! There was no answer except the reassurance of the poor room. The same old snapshots were still pasted against the edges of the mirror over the dresser. Return! Return! The dreamer, feeling somewhat

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unsafe after the strange wall-paper and the unknown room, was compelled to further examine the familiar and went to the closet of the sister. The door opened and the dreamer's mind sought expected things: a homemade cotton nightgown, skirts and sweaters, sturdy school shoes, outgrown, much-laundered dresses. But the closet revealed the long skirts of black silk dresses and, on the nail reserved for sleeping clothes, a lace dress of a color the dreamer knew as robin-egg blue. The dress was crumpled, as if it had been worn the night before. On the floor there were a dozen pairs of tiny, multi-colored shoes. Mary Agnes! Mary Agnes! the dreamer called to the image of the sister with the remarkable health and promise, the bright, undamaged face. Again there was no answer and the dreamer rushed from the room screaming fearfully, Mama! Papa! Running frantically, articles came into view and then vanished: the mother's old garden shoes, the father's hat with a rain-stained brim, the older sister's neat white cotton gloves that seemed to be pulled over her prim hands. The brother's face, shadowed with the secrecy he always maintained about his activities, stepped into the path of the runner. The dreamer felt momentarily impeded by these old signs and signals and had the sensation of coming to a violent stop before them, only to have them change imperceptibly into strangeness. There was a special agony in everything seen in that each contained aspects of the known in juxtaposition with the new and unidentifiable. After a time, the dreamer again stood on the front porch of the house and once more noted the sagging steps and the broom scratches. The dreamer grasped the door knob again and repeated, I am home. I have come home. When the door was opened, the appearance of the tapestry-like wall paper caused no surprise or fear, but now the old hat rack was gone and in its place . . . There was no sunlight and a large, circular object of copper wire stood in the center of the hall.

She awoke shortly after dawn. There were lights in three windows of the hotel across the street. At first she started to turn on the overhead lights in her room, but found the thought of this full illumination unbearable. It was light enough for her to find her way to the hot plate and to start the coffee water to boil. Then she sat before her window and watched the morning come over the city. Actually she was waiting for sleep to leave her, merely breathing through those fifteen minutes or so in which she slowly and reluctantly became a part of the living world. Beyond her, in a lower building, there was a dreary set of apartments pressed together as if they were compartments of a box. After a while a weak light came on in one of the

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rooms and threw its dim orange glow on the black firescape beyond the window. Gradually the girl who had been watching felt the day seep into her. She observed the chipped white paint on her window sill and the rust-covered chair cover. Having always been poor, she did not reject the ugliness of everything about her, but, rather, found in these furnished-room items a feeling of progress. Perhaps it was the privacy, if nothing else. She had, at times, a feeling of holding this room tightly as if it were a small and valued object.

She poured a cup of coffee. She smoked. Her mind seemed utterly dead, as if it were an impenetrable blankness. Small things and sensations appeared to be floating around before her, but they did not have the power to enter her consciousness. At last she looked at the clock and saw that it was eight. She was aware in some deep and hidden part of her nature that this day was special. Yet she could not bring herself to acknowledge fully its importance. Instead she felt that she was only preparing to go to work. She could already have the sensation of her hands in the dish water at the restaurant and see the alcoholic faces she served. Her voice, harsh and suggestive, went over the counter without her being conscious of what she wished to say harshly or what was worth suggesting. The roughness was like an hereditary taint, something she took no willed part in. It was of the same quality as the decay in her teeth, an expected, more or less automatic, thing. And then suddenly the idea struck her. This is the day. I am going to be married.

The idea came fully into her mind, but without the power she had imagined it would have. She had the feeling of holding something back, of cause and consequence being temporarily in abeyance. If it were eight, she might start to dress. He was coming at nine. Yet she did not move, because she felt too relaxed and slow. She looked forward to a rush of activity in which the day would begin on a note fit for it. She thought of him now and remembered her high-heeled black shoes hitting the pavement. There was the bar and her remembrance of being frightened of him and of his fear of her. He staggered and held on to her and they laughed like very mature children. Her legs were slightly crooked and her skirt fell to the point of her knee cap. On the street corner, she remembered him saying, 'Man, that old dog was mean. Me and muh brother took him out hunting with us. The sound of the shot gun got him crazy. He'd damned near eat hisself up. When I was bad, the old man hit me over the head with a skillet, but the time come when I hit him back.' And she told him, 'My grandmother had dropsy. She was just like a balloon. But a sweet, refined old lady.' (Oh, lie, lie. The terrifying grandmother

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with snaggled teeth and lips brown from tobacco chews. A voice like something not human. The filthy, old gray shawl, the cold house, and the same clothes on day and night.) 'We was scared to let her lie down. They die when they lie down and she used to cry like a baby wanting some rest. Well, one night everybody was out and granny commenced to bawl. I got scared and let her lie down. She died in my arms.'

At eight-thirty she took off her nightgown and began to put on the new clothes that had been carefully arranged the night before. The dress was robin-egg blue, her shoes were black, short with round toes. She was dressed now. Her gloves and hat lay on the bed, her coat was brushed, her purse had been emptied of papers and loose tobacco. She sat down again and regretted that it had not taken her more time to dress. Too much waiting spoiled the sense of living. She looked at her face in the mirror. Her hair was brown, tightly curled on the ends. Her skin was dry and lipstick seemed to turn into a brownish orange when she wore it.. For the first time, her body began to react to the strangeness of the day. Her heart beat wildly and, though there was still that remarkable emptiness in her head, that sense of no thought, her muscles were becoming tense. Her eyes felt hot and she was certain a strained expression appeared on her face. She was terrified.

The city was now bright and active. She sat close to the window and watched some workers in the side of a factory in view. There was an old man hunched over a drawing board. She could see the wrinkled side of his face, his high, thin nose, and the thick gray hair that lay flat on his head. In the window above him, a woman was at work over a sewing machine. A bare arm held the cloth in place and the woman's head was bent over in concentration upon the sewing. The watching girl made a deep response to the attentiveness displayed by the working people. She wondered if she, at work, had ever seemed so absorbed to the onlooker. In everything connected with the factory there was a sense of design which the girl intuited. First the steam, then the lights, then the workers. At last, the end of the day and people going home, purposefully, to various places. She was struck by the dreadful and yet appealing calm of drudgery, the singleness of it, and forgot her hatred of the work and routine of her life. She remembered days and months and years of hatred at the far-away home and her break from all that. Freedom had led her to many furnished rooms, many glasses of liquor and many male heads beside hers on a limp, greyish pillow. Drudgery was the payment she owed to some nameless source, her appeal to the revenge that pursued her.

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She heard the elevator coming up and knew it would stop at her floor. Her bell rang and she went toward the door. As she did so, a quick sense of activity consumed her. She half realized, in this moment between the ringing of the bell and the opening of the door, that there would be no bond between the girl who had awakened in the horrible torpor and the one who would appear before the visitor. There was a giggle, a childish, young sound, rising up in her throat. And she stood before him. Before she spoke she had the notion she was going to talk in a language never before heard, and, in a voice of deep sincerity, say new words. When she did speak, she heard only her old self-assured roughness and daring. (She was twenty-one, a waitress, a grammar school graduate, a *delinquent.*) His mouth was rather crooked when he smiled. She noted immediately that his uniform was pressed to knife sharpness. This simple fact, along with the newness of her dress, expressed the religiosity of the moment. He put his arm on her shoulder and it felt very heavy. His hair was not well combed and his eyes retained the memory of last night's whiskey. For a moment she thought of turning away from him and rejecting the union, but she could not do so. She was powerless to divert the direction of her life.

His steps trailed hers through the hall, back to her room. Her coat and hat and gloves lay on the bed. He began to laugh, though there was apparently nothing to set this laughter in motion. She laughed also. When he helped her with her coat, he started, in a reflex way, to embrace her, but he did not actually do so. But they could not stand there, merely looking hopelessly at each other and so he began to talk. Though his body was hard, his voice was surprisingly soft. It was the betrayer of his humanity, rather nervous, lacking in self-confidence, muted by doubts and remorse. Listening to him, her hands began to shake and it took her a long time to put on her hat. When at last she was ready to leave, she had the sense of being paralyzed and was amazed at the way her muscles moved with ease despite the restricted and stiff feeling.

Before leaving, they looked casually around the room. There was nothing there to stop them. Soon he had closed the door and they were in the dark hall waiting for the elevator. When they were actually on the street, both of them felt unprepared for the sunlight. Their eyes blinked and the girl was painfully conscious of the thickness of her stockings and the tightness of the blue dress. There was a frown of concentration and anxiety on the boy's face. Even his body seemed strangely stunted. The girl wondered what he was thinking. She was ignorant of everything about him. Yet she was compelled by the

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miraculous fact of this projected union. It was possible they hated each other. Who could say? Cars whipped past them. The street was alive with noise. The girl caught a glimpse of her face in a mirror and knew that she appeared rough and mean. She did not attempt to present another face to those who were milling around her and the boy. No one cared about them, just as they did not care about the others who had passed through this moment. They were lost in a narrow row of buildings and factories, squeezed in with the rest of humanity. She dimly perceived that all this world was pitifully dependent upon the steady recurrence of the emotion into which she and the boy were drawn.

Now they were separated by fatigue and nervousness. She could only wait for him to curse away his dissatisfaction and he for her loud, rebellious laughter. They proceeded on their way to the place of the ceremony.

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Neither God Nor Devil*

JACQUES B. BRUNIUS

TO ATHEISTS

I WANT TO SPEAK now to all those who, like myself, have no god. On the horizon I can discern little scattered groups of them. They have already ventured too far alone, unconcerned with what was happening behind them, detached from the enigmas they have solved for themselves, unconscious of the knots which still remain to be severed, blind to the hymeneals to be tied. They bear various labels, either adopted by themselves or given them by others. There are free-thinkers, agnostics, the irreligious, the impious, the anti-religious, unbelievers, anti-clericals, rationalists. Very few will consent to declare themselves atheists, a word still bearing a heavy burden of reprobation. There are also the nietzscheans. They have all my sympathy for they are out of luck: there is no subject and no man about whom people have talked and continue to talk more nonsense than about Nietzsche. The fact that the fascists have adopted him would be of no importance—the catholics after all have appropriated Rimbaud—but the worst of it is that a lot of nit-wits have hastened to make a present of Nietzsche to the dictators, apparently without having read him. Let it pass. Not being a nietzschean, I leave it to the specialists to defend Nietzsche, but in passing I should like to say a few words to them. It was but normal and necessary, and to be foreseen, that during the process of man's emancipation a Nietzsche should have arisen to oppose in the most aggressive way all the powers relentlessly bent on crushing the individual, by the 'will to power' conceived on the individual plane. Moreover, the unconquerable disgust inspired by the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, solely bent on gorging itself, could but result in restoring to the 'dangerous life' its prestige of chivalry. It is only by an odious fraud that the dictators lay claim to nietzschism, precisely in order to perpetuate the powers of oppression, objects of Nietzsche's revolt. Nationalists à la Barrès, transfering to the whole nation this impulse of individual aggressiveness, had already

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launched the same swindle. But whichever it is, the individual will to power or the national will to power, it destroys itself by the fact of having to compete with the will of other individuals, other leaders, other nations, other 'master-races.' The will to power, absolutely justifiable in so far as it tends to challenge the masochistic 'will to impotence' which disarms all too many of the oppressed and exploited, cannot however pass from the plane of volition to the plane of lasting reality except by being transcended into a collective, universal will to power, into collective man's will to power over nature and over himself. Whether he is a solitary hermit in a cave or a hereditary tyrant, a pope, demagogic general, hedonist or cynic, it is by virtue of a strange and enduring illusion that one man alone, even a genius, even with absolute power, can conceal from himself his own irremediable weakness. Only humanity is powerful, only a delusion prevents it from discovering its own power.

This long parenthesis, which I meant for the nietzscheans, brings me exactly to what I wanted to say to the rationalists, because I intend to converse with them on their bankruptcy before the demagogues of the irrational.

It is now nearly two centuries since human reason was charted. The Encyclopædists made a list of its contents, drew its outlines, appraised its limits, traced its graph. All that was then known of the outside world, of its working, of the causal succession of events, of the determination of phenomena, naturally found its place within human reason and shaped its structure. Then came people who carefully labelled it all, arranged it in a museum, padlocked the glass cases and double-locked the door on human Reason. So-called rationalists sequestered the poor girl in this increasingly dusty abode and forbade her the slightest contact with all illuminati, the seductive visionaries who wander in the streets and in their minds, who haunt laboratories, painters' studios, popular meetings, and who die in an attic or at a barricade. Pseudo-rationalists have confiscated Reason. And yet, through the centuries she had reached the age of reason only by being aware of all currents of thought. She was no less beholden to alchemists and astrologers than to navigators and doctors, no less to Paracelsus than to Descartes. In her veins flowed the blood of mystics and saints as much as that of scientists and philosophers, of poet, witches and regicides, of law-makers and village idiots. She was human Reason only because, blending within herself the behaviour of the seer and of the logician, that of the prophet and of the determinist, she never consented to check her advance nor to abandon one of her guides to follow the other.

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You who claim to be rationalists, you who have cloistered reason and *closed* rationalism, open your eyes a little on the world we live in, turn round a moment to see the trail you have left. Full of disdain, you have allowed the magi and the mystics to drift away from you. You have thought yourselves the only atheists, and you have never noticed that among mystics and visionaries there were atheists more genuine than you. You thought to confound religions, but they have known so well how to take the same road as you on the way to rationalization that they continue to prosper with the help of the weapons you have given them. Not only do they beat you on your own grounds, but ultimately you are nearer to religion than are certain mystics.

You thought to imprison science in an ice-bound causalism and determinism. De Vries had only to provoke a biological mutation and Heisenberg to state the uncertainty relation, for fideism to raise its head again and introduce through the window the finger of God on which you thought you had slammed the door. Your *closed* rationalism imperils rationalism itself, it is no longer capable of embracing the rational of today, you have surrounded it with customs barriers to protect it from what, irrational at this instant, will be rational the next minute. I demand the re-establishment of free trade in all the domains of thought.

Understand that though I address myself generally to those who call or think themselves rationalists, my words are not aimed at the bourgeois rationalist for whom human reason, at the end of her adventure, has finally run aground on a neatly ruled strand, where signs, which one would be greatly mistaken in thinking cabalistic, are traced in roundhand. The ferocious and comfortable rationalism of Debit and Credit has for long been fit only for the guillotine and not for discussion. No, I want those whose whole reason is on fire with a passion for justice to hear these words, in which I have tried to put all the rigour, all the brutality and all the stringency that I owe to my friends.

You have thought it decorous not to allow Reason to gad about, and for fear she should get a child by a mesmerist or a Swedenborgian you have preferred to set up house for her with profiteers and parvenus so that she will the more inevitably become bourgeoise. And after all you have set her up in fine style. This upper-class Reason is received everywhere, in the drawing-rooms and alcoves, in the banks and champagne brothels of the rationalist bourgeoisie. She even keeps a little bag of valuables round her neck under her chemise.

But you have forgotten that people do not like marriages of

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reason. Like ostriches you have wanted to ignore the irrational impulses of man. What would you think of the lens polisher who would not admit the necessity for chromatic corrections, or of the artillery-man who refused to allow for lateral deviation? And yet their mistakes would be small compared with yours.

During a good third of his existence man dreams: no one knows exactly in what proportion work, intoxication, desire, the marvellous, share the other two thirds, and yet society claims to establish psychological rules and social laws that govern only utilitarian work and reasonable actions, where emotional factors, not having been allowed for, are supposed to play no part. Do not tell me all that is just a question of ruling-class conventions and ruling-class laws, and that you have had nothing to do with them. You are a party to these conventions so long as you uphold the same *closed* rationalism as inspires them. It will be specious for you to argue your will to overthrow this decadent civilization so long as you cannot set against it a fresh reason, full, and yet still avid for what is new: a child's reason.

> 'One must have been one of the smouldering crowd at a time of revolutionary action or dramatic events to be able to understand the degree of sensibility the mind can attain when it surrenders itself to the violence of collective passion. A crowd is a multiplication, not an addition,' writes Pierre Mabille in his *Miroir du Merveilleux*. And he adds: 'Emotional intensity, the primordial factor in the dynamism of the masses, prevents scientific history from understanding the origins of revolutions and religions. Everything is absurd if one confines oneself to official memoranda and administrative reports, and yet nothing is absurd, for on the whole, the blaze of passion gives more light than any sensible advice.'

I do not deny that your average reason is sufficient for you to account for most of the facts of everyday life. I appreciate at its just worth its usefulness in times of calm, at an equal distance between two crises, emotional and social. Newtonian mechanics suffice to explain the world on a life-size scale, but cease to be exact on the scale of the microcosm as well as on that of the macrocosm. The same can be said, but far more seriously, of your immutable reason. Your reason must confess to failure before most of the great manifestations of human behaviour which at the time are commonly called 'irrational,' whether they are to do with love or war, with murder or panic, with revolution or idolatry for a man.

And yet these 'irrational' impulses exist, and in choosing to ignore them—as if knowledge of them and their integration with the rational

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was not one of the most urgent aims of reason itself—you have denied yourselves the benefit of some, the control of others; you have refused the task of guiding or directing them, of cultivating their seed or of sucking out their poison: you have left the usufruct to the lowest riff-raff. You have neglected the blaze of light which some of these moments of passion have the virtue of casting upon reason.

Finally, you have made your so-called, your *closed* Reason, so morose and have shown her up as being so powerless, that you have estranged from her a constantly growing number of reasonable beings; you have flung them back into darkness and into the clutches of the worst adventurers, who have had a clear field. Do you realize that you bear a very great responsibility for the unleashing of the present cataclysm in which universal reason may well be engulfed? Two centuries ago, with the growth of rationalism, humanity thought it could already see the close of the era of *divine* right, and its cortège of arbitrary rule fade away. Nevertheless it is this same rationalism which, because it has been allowed to become jejune and atrophied, has brought us to the epoch of tyrants by *human* right.

The ideas about tyrants which still prevail today date from antiquity, and are still impregnated with the illusion that a leader must be imposed from above or from outside. Modern reality is tragically otherwise. The present-day tyrant is indeed proposed, financed and supported by powers above or abroad, but because this fact must not become known he affects an open hostility towards these powers. He incessantly overstates this hostility the more easily to conceal the protection which enables him to organize costly propaganda, fanaticize his followers and create his myth. He is then swept to power, not by the direct intervention of his protectors, but by the bewildered multitude, fuddled with demagogy. The modern tyrant gets himself elected by plebiscite; his allowing himself the luxury of juggling with the percentages by terrorism and corruption, and of falsifying the results, might for a moment be mistaken for vanity rather than for lack of certainty; for if collective excitement has been carefully worked up his majority must be assured. In reality, the use of intimidation by terror is needed chiefly to hasten success, but in most cases the modern tyrant can, at a given moment, get himself plebiscited with no faking. This does not mean that terrorism is an unnecessary luxury for him and that he is not obliged to be ready to use it, knowing as he does in advance that a small part only of his promises will be kept, and that he could not face a second plebiscite nor even guarantee his power without physically crushing his adversaries and bribing his supporters.

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Let no one venture to make use of the above lines to accuse such and such a people of being afflicted with the racial peculiarity of a taste for oppression. No people has ever given itself a dictator for the simple pleasure of being oppressed. An analysis of the sado-masochistic complex which develops in the masses during the advent of a dictatorship would reveal a whole in which the wish for emancipation, acceptance of submission through fear of responsibility and liberty, the will to dominate, selfishness and the giving of oneself to the community, are so intermingled that I defy anyone to give ascendancy to a single one of these contradictory trends. In the whole world there is no one people who cannot be brought to an adventure of this sort by a long period of poverty, a strong enough dose of humiliation, an all-prevailing despair. Its racial peculiarities or its democratic traditions will make no difference. It would be impossible to cite a people more enamoured of independence, more imbued with democratic traditions and revolutionary experience than the different men who go to make up the French nation, and yet it is this very people who had the sad privilege, in the nineteenth century alone, of giving to the world the spectacle of three successive aberrations: bonapartism, badinguism and boulangerism.[1] And it was not only the former revolutionary townsfolk of Etienne Marcel,[2] now grown into the decadent middle-classes, who cheered and hung out flags, but also the very people of the Jacqueries and the Commune.

Bonapartism has taken on very different shapes in spreading through the world: sergeants' dictatorships, colonels' régimes, generals' pronunciamentos, presidential power, solitary tyrannies; and its face *here* has become more hideously distorted than *there*. But observe how immutable are some of its features. Except for the Mikado there exists nowhere a leader descended from heaven by a more or less ancient heredity. Nowadays we see none but leaders who emerge from the crowd, to rise little by little towards divinity. The Archimedean buoyancy of popular idolatry hoists them to such a level that they can be looked upon only as exceptional beings, therefore vaguely divine, unless an emotional counter-current should come to interrupt their ascension. And I envy, without sharing it, the optimism of those who hope to circumvent the epidemic merely by Hitler's downfall.

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1. Badinguet, popular name of Napoleon III. General Georges Boulanger, leader of the nationalist party and War Minister in 1886. His plot against the Third Republic failed. (*Translator's note.*)

2. Etienne Marcel, provost (mayor) of Paris, presented to the States General in 1356 plans for democratic reforms. He stirred up the Parisians to revolt against the Dauphin, and imprisoned him in the Hôtel de Ville. (*Translator's note.*)

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It is in fact a religious phenomenon which is taking place, comparable in many ways to the brewing of such myths as those of Jesus Christ or of Quetzalcoatl. First, the coming of the Messiah, conceived in a long period of neurotic despair, is sublimated into an anxious expectancy. Then comes the man whom legend will deify. The rescue of human reason demands an elucidation of the religious phenomenon, not merely a negation of it. It is all up with man's most immediate future if it is not understood that beyond the issue of the present conflict the general crisis—of which this war, as much on the ideological as on the economic plane, is but a minor episode—must be surmounted.

FOR AN ENCYCLOPÆDIA: AGAINST THE ACADEMIES

> "Thus, because brains are insufficiently scoured of Christianity and its scabs, it seems, at the end of this first third of the twentieth century, that the Encyclopædia must be rewritten.'—RENE CREVEL—*Le Clavecin de Diderot,* 1932.

I remember writing one day, in about 1931 I think: 'All that is done against religion is well done.' Today I confess that I was grossly mistaken. For centuries all that has been done against religion has not only been nearly always badly done, but must be started completely afresh. It is not enough, as I then thought, heedlessly to pile up reasonings, professions of atheism or anti-religious sallies in the hope that sooner or later brains would scrape themselves clean. If this sufficed I can think of nothing with a more ravaging power of negation to any religion than the admirable question: 'Could God, who is omniscient and omnipotent, create a stone so heavy that he could not lift it?'

But even 'God's' suicide would not cure the neurosis of religion. The real problem of divinity no longer seems to me to reside in the personification of the forces of nature, the forces outside man. Knowledge of these forces has tended to depersonalize them more and more and to strip them of their more threatening aspect. Goethe's *Erlkönig* could be rewritten: it is rather the psychological process of *inner* secession which conditions the general anguish of today.

The illness approached its acute state only with the almost universal triumph of monotheism, substituting intellectual for childlike religions. Until then all that was divine and sacred remained outside man, it did not seriously encroach on his inner self. There was no precise connection between the gods and prevailing ideas of human ethics. The multiplicity of gods and the extreme diversity of rites and worship guaranteed man's indivisibility. The attempt to condense all

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the gods into one started the dislocation which up to the present has grown steadily worse. All the would-be monotheisms, despite their pretensions and their despairing efforts, have in fact merely ended up with an irreducible dualistic 'ditheism,' and all the theological wrangling for the last two thousand years has really revolved round this unavowed contradiction.

Having ascribed to god his own power over the world and his own aspirations, having assigned to the devil his own weaknesses and those of his private impulses he most reproves, man is torn by forces he has expelled from himself, and has lost all hope of sizing up their respective values. He would have been able to grapple with the solution of his *inner* contradictions: once outside him he can only fall a victim to them. Man, ceasing to revere the outside world and other beings, more and more often creates gods in his own image, yields to a fallacious desire for unity and quenches his thirst for mythology at the unique fountain of an anthropomorphic god; indulging in this monstrous egotism: the oppression of man by man; the oppressor, in its widest meaning, being either god, others or oneself.

Thus the two outstanding events in man's religious and moral history are, on the one hand, the creation of the first god with a human face, first symbolization of oppression, and on the other, the myth of the incarnation of god in man—as for instance Christian mythology puts before us with its Jesus—followed by demoniac possession and mystic marriage as its natural corollaries. Nothing can be more mystifying than such a symbol where the *centripetal* myth of god or the devil penetrating man hides in fact the evisceration of man's conscience, a *centrifugal* projection of the values of Good and Evil.

Man, having invented fire, thinks he is damned for having stolen it from heaven: having invented the wheel he timidly fastens that which will crush him to the Chariot of Destiny.

Man, who has invented the lightning conductor and the Belisha beacon, kills other men in the name of his god, invents the tank and the flame-thrower the better to extirpate the demon in another's belly.

Through the arenas, the stake, the crusades, holy mass and war, man, doubly stifled by the bicoloured winding-sheet of Good and Evil and the shroud of Predestination embroidered with motifs of Divine Grace, lives like an ant and dies like a sucker.

And yet, from Manichee the Persian who was flayed alive, to the Dutch Jansenius who died symbolically of a plague which he was said to have contracted by handling old theological books, an

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unbroken tremor of human revolt runs through several centuries of moral oppression, unbroken and increasing, whose waves today lap furiously the unlit skies of the catechisms.

Rebels just as much as the insurgents of Spartacus were the heroic Manicheans, massacred in hundreds of thousands during eight hundred years, and whose torment was to rise again in the admirable civilization of the troubadours, to burst into brightest flame during the catharist quest for the Grail. If they wanted to remain christian (and they had not yet the moral temerity to brave their century to the point of declaring themselves atheists), the sole resource of the Albigenses and Vaudois was to identify Gold and the Corruption of the World with the devil, to drown their precious metals in lakes, and to preach the extinction of the human race. As the only heroic and logical attempt to reduce to absurdity the absurd christian dualism, the catharist heresy still exercises its fascination on all rebels pledged to man's emancipation.

And even when a mathematical genius—passing from the theory of probability to the Jansenist postulate of grace—peters out with the illusion of one among so many other sorts of christian rationalism, Pascal's revolt is neither more significant nor more moving than de Sade's. Leaving behind them the tinsel of their century, in the seclusion of illness or of prison, both drank at the same spring, then each went on his different way, bound to the same moral equation.

Since Pascal, who attempted to reconcile man with god, the attenuated voice of the great heresies reaches us only through the lineage of the Jansenist convulsionaries of Saint-Médard, the Bonjourists eating their bread-and-excrement, and the disquieting hysterics created out of nothing by Charcot.[3] Sade's voice has echoed louder and louder through the vaults where roams the genius of the splendid nineteenth century. Quivering balls on the mental billiard-table, Shelley, Lautréamont, Marx, Nerval, Rimbaud, Swinburne, Freud, Lenin, transmit to us the shock of the only heresy likely to endure, the great modern heresy of liberation, the heresy of atheism. Man tears off in shreds the christian tunic of Nessus, not without tearing painfully his own skin. More than one gives up halfway; millions of others lose themselves in new mystical labyrinths. Naked at last, face

3. The persecuted Jansenists claimed that miracles took place at the tomb of the Jansenist deacon, François de Paris, in the cemetery of Saint-Médard. The crowd assembled there went into convulsions, some of them prophesied, women leaped about, barked, miaowed, had themselves crucified, etc.

The Bonjour brothers, founders of a small heretical sect at the end of the eighteenth century. (*Translator's note.*)

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to face with the naked world, shaken with fear, man seeks another shelter, no matter what. Deprived of god and seized with panic man deifies a man: *Mikado, Führer, Leader* or *Chef*: or an entity—nation, empire, race or Reich. Ever since the trauma of light, cold and drought at his birth, man has been used to changing his shirt, taking off one only to put on another. For centuries his habit has been to abandon one myth only to create a new one. After each *élan* towards nakedness, light, freedom, atheism, man falls back into a shirt, into mud and chains, into religion, before he can spring forward again. On casting off Egypto-Græco-Roman paganism, occidental man found almost no difficulty in donning the new shirt christianity had woven for him. Twentieth-century man has not yet created the human myth he needs in place of the divine. The transition from Pharaoh to pope, from Jupiter to god, from Isis and Venus to the virgin Mary was comfortably managed for our fathers. Indeed, they noticed the difference so little that worship of the Black Virgin was carried on almost to our day, and Priapus, disguised as Saint-Foutin, still stirred the bowels of our great-grandmothers. There is no need to go into ecstasies over the farsightedness or the genius of the priests of that time. Their task was quite easy, and lay merely in exchanging one oppression for another. The task of the great thinkers of today is nothing less than to change a myth of oppression for one of the liberation—for a myth that allows man to escape from god without selling his soul to the devil—a myth which does not leave man, freed from god, alone with himself—a collective *mystique* whereby the individual will be mystified neither by collectivity nor by a leader—a myth where neither *capital* nor *captain* are synonyms for virility—a myth of moral and material liberation, where order and disorder become one and the same activity.

No wonder the great doctors of today are still unable to fulfil their task: it is beyond the potentialities of a single man, and they are still scattered to the four corners of the world of thought. The creation of a modern myth coincides with the problem of knowledge. Philosophers, physicists, mathematicians, astronomers, chemists, doctors, biologists, economists, psychologists, painters, engineers, architects, revolutionaries, poets and lovers—each selfishly keeps to himself his own share of present-day knowledge. Only from their encounter can the myth be born, from their work and suffering in common and from their joys shared. Like political, economic or social revolutions, like scientific or philosophic upheavals, moral revolutions may be conceived by one alone, but must be fulfilled in a collective parturition.

Here as elsewhere segmentation is rife. Moral man is but half a

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man, but *homo sapiens* has split himself into an infinite number of specialists.

What a spectacle the world of today offers us with the welders who can no longer use a screw-driver; the surgeons who, if they have learnt to remove a tumour of the brain, hardly remember how to set a fractured thigh-bone; the physicists whose absorption in the neutron does not allow them to take any interest in thermodynamics, the anthropologist for whom the study of a South Seas tribe is too exacting for him to observe the rites of children playing in his street, the genetician and the psychologist, pursuing, in opposite directions, one the *germ-cell* and the other the *libido*, who will never realize that perhaps their ways will converge.

In 1939 I tried to give the alarm in a film called *Violon d'Ingres*. I contrasted this increasing specialization with the disinterested activities which still tend to fill the leisure of people gifted with enduring youth.

At the time the above lines were taking me to the core of this problem, I received from New York one of André Breton's recent texts in which appreciably parallel views are expressed:

> 'Not only have words fallen into crazy laxity, not only, as Rougemont says, "Our language is out of gear," but what may be considered the masterminds of our time are no longer expert except *in their own line*: they think nothing of negating themselves if one tries to take them out of their own sphere. Notice that it was quite different in the so hastily decried period of the Middle Ages. Today we are confronted at least by this double problem: the meaning of words to be recovered; I am not mad enough to say universal knowledge, but at least the appetite for universal knowledge to be rediscovered.'—ANDRE BRETON—*Situation du Suréalisme entre les deux guerres*—*VVV*, Nos. 2-3.

One of the principal obstacles which seem to me to be in the path of this rediscovery is the individualism which has taken possession of minds most gifted in every sphere. This attitude can result in nothing but the slow wasting away of mind and knowledge. The conception of genius and invention is more and more surrounded by a superstition which demands their isolation, an isolation which becomes the condition and price of the glory attached to genius and invention. The least little bungler, whether he uses brush, fountain-pen or microscope, would think himself unworthy of the fame he covets if he consented to share in its pursuit.

The amount of reprobation earned by surrealism for such scandalous customs as that of several people writing one poem, or of failing to sign a composite drawing of the 'cadavre exquis' sort, is well known. The mere thought of a 'group' was enough to make all the daubing and versifying guinea-fowls utter shrieks of horror.

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It is time that the practice of collective research was extended to all fields of knowledge. I demand the forming of groups: the biologist who already needs a statistician to help him must not be afraid to work with a painter. And as biology is henceforth inseparable from chemistry, which cannot do without physics, in its turn the prisoner of mathematics, I ask that these groups shall of necessity be compounded of specialists of all known specialties, and of all those which will assert their use in the future. Tomorrow no economist will dare to write a line or draw a curve without asking the advice of a poet.

Only thus can we avoid the oppression of man by the specialist and of the specialist by his specialty.

Only thus can we reintegrate words into a language, a myth, a universal desire. Even so we shall be very far from recovering wholly the sense of life, that is, of Liberty; at the most we shall have retempered one of the tools of our emancipation.

Translated from the French by Mary Kesteven.

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Film Chronicle

The Artlessness of Walt Disney

"WHAT HATH Walt wrought?" Mr. Wolcott Gibbs queries in dismay after seeing *The Three Caballeros.* And others join the cry, and cast their eyes back to those days when "a couple of mice in simple arrangements of black and white" contented Disney. Walt has indeed wrought something monstrous. And the art critic may well turn away in dismay. But the psychoanalyst, or the social analyst—the inquirer into the mythos, the ethos of the times—may, on the contrary, well look twice. For *The Three Caballeros* is not Disney's private monster, his personal nightmare. It is a nightmare of these times.

Mr. Disney does not, in the first place, work alone. He heads what Mr. Robert Feild, in *The Art of Walt Disney,* describes as virtually a modern industrial plant, in which scores of people submit ideas toward the making of one film. But even in the early days, before he headed any such film factory, Disney was to a very special degree receptive to conditions of mind prevailing with the public generally. It has always been his gift to be able to accept wholeheartedly the outlook of the hour, and to improvise with it, whatever it might be. It is Disney's "atrocious taste," his lack of perspective on what he is doing, that most appalls Mr. Gibbs in *The Three Caballeros.* But it is just Disney's distinguishing characteristic that he *is* uncritical of what he reflects. He is quite artless. If the values by which the society lives are still serving, if the prevailing outlook is relatively bright-faced and aggressive, he will improvise from that—and give us Mickey Mouse. If the time is one of crisis, and these values will no longer serve but are in conflict and in question, if the prevailing state of mind is a deep bewilderment, he will improvise with equal lack of inhibition. His particular talent is that he does not embarrass himself. This makes his dreams sometimes monstrous. But it gives them a wide reference.

In *The Three Caballeros* Donald Duck opens three packages from his Latin American friends. These packages contain assorted vehicles by means of which he is, ostensibly, allowed a brief odyssey of Latin America. What we can learn of Latin America from *The Three Caballeros* is less than little. But what we can learn of where *we* live is a great deal. For it is through *this* world that, quite unknown to Mr. Disney, Donald makes his voyage.

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"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. . . ."

These lines of Yeats describe the world the three packages open to us.

The first package contains a home projector and a movie entitled "Strange Birds." From the very first moment we are in a world which falls apart: Donald has trouble placing the film image upon the screen where it belongs; it projects itself on his white backside and he has to hump it up into place. No sooner is the screen world set up than the natural barrier between that world and Donald's world is toppled, as Donald's shadow startles a screen bird, as Donald and the narrator converse, as the irrepressible aracuan bird hops right off the screen to shake hands with him, hops back. Even the world in which we, as audience, are situated, falls apart. Trespassing into the second section of *The Three Caballeros,* the aracuan runs right off the film *we* are viewing: he runs into sheer blackness, a bit of sound track sketched in to one side. On the same order, here in the first section when the North Pole appears on Donald's screen, sketched in upside down, the narrator makes the suggestion that the theatre be turned upside down. The image then rights itself—and supposedly we are standing on our heads. Even within the world of the film "Strange Birds" itself all natural barriers are down. The narrator sometimes creates the image upon the screen as he talks: he remembers climbing a rock as a little boy, and a rock materializes; he changes his mind and decides it was a tree; the rock vanishes and a tree appears in its place. He cannot decide which of the two it was, and dismisses the whole matter, dropping the little boy down through space—to land with a jolt on a ledge, from which he looks out at us angrily. He converses freely with this image of himself as a little gauchito, sometimes yelling at him to carry out more accurately the gist of his narration.

"Strange Birds" concerns itself briefly with some assorted birds, and at greater length with two very particular birds: the cold-blooded penguin and the winged mule. As the stories of these birds unfold, falling, or falling asunder, is persistently a leitmotif. The gauchito's clothing falls off him as he walks; the ornero bird falls off its branch; the flamingoes raise both legs at once and drop abruptly under water; or the little penguin's boat of ice melts in the tropic sun, dissolves nightmarishly from under his scampering feet. But it is not only in the compulsive repetition of such details, it is in their underlying plots that these stories summon up the image of a world that "cannot hold." Both main stories feature quests. The quest of the cold-blooded penguin is for a warmer clime; the quest of the gauchito is for capture and exploitation of the winged mule. Both stories feature nightmare moments suffered in the course of the quest. The penguin's boat melts from under him; the gauchito

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cannot get the mule's wings unstrapped. Finally the penguin reaches "the isle of his dreams," and finally the gauchito triumphs at the Big Race. But: as we are taking leave of the penguin, we are told casually that *now* he rather gets to thinking of how nice it used to be back at the frigid pole. And, similarly, just as the gauchito is holding out his hand for the gold, the mule with a heehaw flies off with him into the blue, and the narrator lightly remarks, "Neither him nor me was ever seen again as long as we lived." What has involved endless nightmares to attain, turns to air.

The one character who in this section never has the props removed suddenly from under him is the aracuan bird. He alone does not suffer. He in fact particularly enjoys looking on at the havoc. And he enjoys contributing his own small measure of destruction. A little bird places twig upon twig upon twig, painstakingly, to make a nest. The aracuan, eye glittering, hands him just one more twig—and the entire construction collapses. The aracuan can relish the havoc about him, the worlds falling apart, because he carefully refrains from taking up his abode there as others do. It is altogether apt that he is shown popping his head into the picture from various points on the periphery. It is in some periphery that he dwells. While the world explodes, he treads air.

Disney himself, of course, improvising this first sequence of the film, operates at a similar remove. Most of the critics agreed in preferring this sequence. And if one is improvising with a world in which "the center cannot hold," the periphery is a strategic point from which to work. It is a strategic point that has been employed by almost all of those screen artists who have, in the last few years, succeeded in pulling off any sort of style. Many films resort to it at moments: have an actor suddenly turn and howl at the audience, or shrug, or yell "Hi, mom!," dissociating himself from the world the film has been creating, giving it the wink. To maintain this remove is an acrobatic gift, of course, comparable to the art of tightrope walking. Not all can manage it. Bing Crosby is one actor who can; Preston Sturges a director.

But with the opening of the second and third packages, Disney surrenders this vantage point. From now on Donald no longer sits and observes a world cast upon a screen; he mounts onto the open pages of the pop-up book, enters, on the magic serape, directly into the portfolio —and takes an active part. Disney's style immediately suffers. Like Donald Duck when in the third sequence he tries to balloon up into a larger size, Disney becomes monstrously lack-shape. For example, techniques are mixed incongruously: conventional cartoon drawing, live action, calendar art, chic illustration, and something comparable to the art employed in cosmetics advertisements, follow upon each other in violent succession, or are employed simultaneously.

The bulk of films today display—though in less enthusiastic fashion —this formlessness. Or they avoid it only by maintaining a slick genteel

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neutrality (these are James Agee's special quarry), or by maintaining a skinny focus—concentrating on a faithful presentation of milieu, perhaps, or concentrating on making our pulses jump. Disney is not one to play it safe. His appetite is too good. He blunders right in, and quite loses control of his material for a while. No longer mischievously improvising upon a world that is unsure, he suffers instead the contortions of one who inhabits this world. For a while, out of the instinct of self-preservation, he keeps returning us periodically to what has the semblance of solid ground. Thus when Donald hops onto the pop-up book, the camera immediately closes in and very soon we are moving round corners, turning down streets not visible in our first supposedly over-all glance. When Donald flies into the pictures in the portfolio, he penetrates into even further beyonds; boundaries fall apart for him and he moves from realm to realm without deference to the laws of physics. But periodically the camera backs off from the pop-up book to give us an "over-all" glance again. And periodically we are swooped out of the portfolio to enter it anew.

Something rather similar to these departures and returns has become almost a cliché in musicals. The scene will open in a theatre or nightclub. A stage will be defined for us, a visibly solid platform. The camera will then close in on the show that is going on, and promptly transport us into never never lands. Again we turn corners to behold new vistas. Or perhaps the small courtyard with which we were first confronted (in which Betty Grable is drilling some maidens) just expands and expands and expands, the camera allowing us farther and farther views. Or perhaps we move up on the pinball machine we have seen the characters on the stage playing, and suddenly among the pins Eleanor Powell emerges, costumed as a pinball, to execute a dance. Always at the end of such flights we are returned to the members of the audience in their theatre seats or around their nightclub tables, and they mechanically smirk and clap as though nothing at all strange had been happening.

Disney, by having Donald periodically hop off the pop-up book, emerge out of the portfolio, just for a moment before re-entering, in the same way manages to deny the facts of where we've been. These returns obey a compulsion to assure us that there is no going so far afield here that one cannot return. But it is relevant to examine the solid base, the home, to which Donald is returned, to inquire just where the tangible frameworks of book and of portfolio are themselves supposed to be situated. Disney situates them nowhere at all. When Donald emerges from the book or the portfolio he is given a floor to stand on, and apparently there is a base plug available to him, for in the first section we see him plug in the projector; but for the rest he is staged merely against a perfectly blank background, of some solid color. The home to which he returns is no place with a definition; it is neutral area—nothing more.

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I have spoken of the departures taken, and the compulsive but empty returns, in terms of geography; but one can talk of them, too, in terms of the mind. Known points are left behind here, too, and boundaries blur. For example, after Donald is kissed by YaYa, an eruption of patterned shapes occurs in the air. Donald is, we gather, seeing stars. But where what we see on the screen ceases to be Donald's ecstatic vision of things one cannot tell. Is the cock fight between the two men, for example, something in Donald's head, or is it really happening? If it is really happening, is it Donald who visualizes the men as cocks, or is it just anyone? As the film progresses, and especially with the opening of the third package, these departures from known mental points become more and more critical, the returns to home base more and more far-fetched.

But Disney has a hearty enough appetite for the material with which he is dealing, eventually to *let* "the center fall apart," and cease to attempt these meaningless returns. He finally surrenders to his material and lets it have its own way with him—much as Donald Duck, after he has pulled at the ribbons tying the third package, lets himself get sucked into the kaleidoscopic vortex they promptly form, and there be translated. From the moment Donald gazes into the portfolio at the night sky above Mexico City, and a face materializes out of a star, and he falls in, questing a kiss, we are returned to known points only by way of echoes—echoes of former adventures in the film, or echoes of objects we have seen spilling through the air out of the pinata.

Disney has finally allowed himself to be pulled, as it were, inside out; for instead of viewing the world from a periphery, as in the first section, we view it now from blind center. We have a nightmare view. With Disney's surrender to this view the material attains a sort of integration again, a nightmare integration. From this point on it is monstrous; it is, as Mr. Gibbs points out, lewd, and it is, too, psychopathically chaotic, very hard on the eyes. It is, in short, as much an ordeal to view as a real nightmare is to undergo. But it at least has so to speak found out what it is. And it manages, too, as nightmares will, to dredge up some rather inspired images.

This section of the film deals with exactly the thematic material the first section dealt with, now from inside out. As in the first section, "things fall apart." Landscapes, objects, persons are shattered or blur, suffer translation, as if they were of no more body than reflections in water. Nothing holds its shape. And through this section, as through the first, runs the theme of a quest that, after nightmares suffered, attains its object only to have the moment emptied of all meaning. Donald pursues various female faces and forms that materialize, out of air, invitingly. But as he closes in for the kiss, as he dives at the face, it turns into a flower and his head goes through it as through a paper hoop—he emerges wearing a collar of petals, a clown's collar. Or per-

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haps, in the face's place, erupt the heads of his two comrades, on hideous long necks, shrieking fun of him. The film mounts in hysteria. Time and again he closes in, only to have the face vanish, or the figure explode. The kiss, or its equivalent, is not forever withheld. Sometimes Donald does seem to have attained his heart's desire. But these moments are deceptive. At one point, for example, one of the "pretty girls," in response to his advances, takes him by the hands finally and swings him, amorously, back and forth. He "belongs to her heart," he has his desire, one would say. But we promptly cut to a shot of this from above. The ecstatic Donald whirls round and round the girl; he whirls himself into several Donalds; the whole scene becomes a whirling pattern, in which we can no longer distinguish girl or Donald. Out of this whirl is born first a decorative pot, then finally Donald himself again—"Where am I?" he squawks— standing now in an entirely different locality, among some obscene cacti. As a girl materializes at the horizon, he sets out again in pursuit. It is all to do over again. Just as with the penguin's quest and with the gauchito's quest, at the very moment success is at hand, the moment is emptied utterly of meaning. If fireworks did not mercifully write "fin—the end" to this film, the quest might indeed repeat itself thus brokenly on and on and on and on.

The Three Caballeros may be a bad film but it is a good nightmare. Like all good nightmares its reference is wide. Though it might startle some stars to be told so, Donald Duck could be likened, in his adventures here, his confusions and translations, to most of the major characters now passing across our screens—from a character like the heroine of *Cover Girl,* who climbs the ladder of success only to stop at the top and look back, questioning what has been gained, to a character like Ernie Mott in *None But the Lonely Heart,* questing a "free and beautiful and noble life," questing a world in which he can live in Peace and love in Peace, but finding no such world—"tramp of the universe."

BARBARA DEMING

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French Expectations

VICTOR SERGE

THE "LIBERATION" of France came in answer to vast anxiety. Oppression, pillage, rationing and terror had been making national humiliation seem even heavier to bear. And I tend to believe that, on the morrow of defeat, a majority of Frenchmen believed in reconciliation with the victors who then seemed invincible, and in the need for a "National Revolution" that would be reactionary in its political institutions but progressive in its economic innovations. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact at that time, forced the Communists to encourage or tolerate this state of mind. Disappointment came towards the end of 1940, when people saw, during the winter, the results of the systematic pillaging of France. The first attempts at resistance date from that time. In June 1941, the Russo-German war changed everything; Marshal Petain's "National Revolution" sank into discredit and panic while the Communist Party, recovering its strength, directed its excellent organization towards armed resistance to Nazi occupation. From the time the United States entered the war, some official circles in Vichy strove to play a double game and the man in the street began believing that the Second World War would end as the first one had.

Complete refusal to collaborate with the enemy—with the authorities in power—means suicide, under a totalitarian domination. As long as it was still possible to entertain some illusions, a strong minority of Frenchmen collaborated sincerely with the Germans, while a large majority resigned themselves to collaborating. It was necessary to live, to work and to avoid being thrown into a concentration camp. A former French deputy recently estimated that nine out of every ten French citizens could be charged with collaboration. France, with its critical mind and common sense, thus entered upon an *era of duplicity*. I had seen this modern ailment's birth in Russia, during the years 1927-1930, when absolutism asserted itself. Official lies, moral reservations and clandestine resistance then became commonplace: They are among the basic traits of totalitarian regimes, when people seek to reassure themselves by invoking an historical predestination that, in the long run, is beneficial.

In France, the wealthy classes had, in general, been friendly towards Nazism: only by associating themselves with the "New Order" could they keep their factories and businesses going and their fortunes intact. Now these same classes are emerging from German occupation with their plants pillaged and worn, with their fortunes invested in in-

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flated paper-money and with an expression of treason on their faces. The extreme rightist organizations have disappeared, from the Royalist *Action Française,* whose leader Charles Maurras has been condemned to life imprisonment, to the group of adventurers from the industrial suburbs which include Jacques Doriot and Paul Marion, both of whom are former members of the Communist Party. Some "Cagoulards," who formerly were planning a conspiracy similar to Franco's coup in Spain, indeed fought well in the De Gaulle forces and in the resistance movement, and one section of the capitalist class of France staked its wealth on de Gaulle in the early stages of the game and still has reasonable hopes for the future. But on the whole, France continues to veer towards the left.

The middle class has been ruined and has drawn closer to the working class which has regained unity through privation. In the early days of defeat, all sorts of refugees could be heard on the roads expressing sensible opinions concerning those who were to be held responsible, or on structural reforms or the imminence of revolution; a sort of socialistic consciousness wider in scope than that of the militant Socialists, was thus born within a few days. Now Jacques Maritain readily uses the world "revolution" and the economic program of the Popular Republican movement, a Catholic organization, does not perceptibly differ from that of the Socialist Party! Everyone realizes that France's reconstruction cannot be accomplished by a return to the past, that the sick capitalism of the end of the Third Republic is now dead, that large-scale nationalization and social security measures are the necessary basis for the planning and direction of economy. Would it be possible to permit the accomplices of Nazism to retain their capital, to rebuild the devastated regions to the profit of private enterprises which are bankrupt and cannot do without the aid of the state, to give the press back to the corrupt trusts, not to control exports and imports? Necessity alone puts France on the threshold of a deeply revolutionary economic transformation. When the prisoners of war and workers now interned in Germany return home, they will have no fear of being outspoken after having seen from near the results of planned economy. Hence it will probably be difficult to defend the old economic order with much vigor, and it will seem obvious that, to achieve its reestablishment, a reactionary neo-fascist dictatorship would have to be established. In General de Gaulle's circle itself, there are many who favor planned economy. Big capital will thus concentrate on preserving managerial positions in this new economy, and on maintaining the medium and small private ownership of production facilities.

The resistance was far from being a revolutionary movement in the Socialistic sense of the word. It was a *national* movement, gathering together men of all political backgrounds on a platform of immediate salva-

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tion which excluded traditional conservatism but did not completely exclude totalitarian tendencies. The ideology of the "single national and social party" remains quite strong among men of the right and the left and even among some Communists. The ranks of the Resistance were composed of young men who did not want to be deported to Germany, of men who were compromised and feared the fate of hostages; in short, of men who felt more secure in the woods—the Maquis—than in cities and villages. They were defending their elementary right to live. They compromised those who backed them through family ties, through generosity or duty. With the help of de Gaullist officers and of the clandestine Communist machine which had its own financial and armament resources, they became an organized army as soon as it was felt that Nazism was doomed.

Gaullism, whose birth I witnessed in Vichy France, was at first only a confused idealism based on the pleasant knowledge that someone, in London or elsewhere, was not surrendering, was continuing the fight, was being supported. But it soon became a vast national conspiracy. According to official declaration of the Communist Party, the organization of Communist resistance began a month before the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union, evidently under direct orders received from Moscow. Most probably, the difficult Balkan situation then forced the Soviet Union to consider necessary the creation of an opposition movement within the Nazi-occupied countries. As soon as the German armies crossed the borders into Russia, the Communists formed their first bands of partisans and guerrillas. Later, they constituted the Gaullist "National Front" which never managed to obtain leadership among the clandestine Gaullist movements. Their strength, however, resided in their coherent organization, in the loyalty of many workers and intellectuals, in the Russian victories and in the old revolutionary myth. In addition, anti-Bolshevism played into their hands with its bloodshed.

While the Socialist Party was splitting into pro-Nazi advocates of surrender (Spinasse, Chassaigne, Zoretti and others), into a trend towards resigned adaptation (Paul Faure), and into a trend towards underground resistance (Max Dormoy), the Communist Party turned without a split, from a policy of well-meaning neutrality towards Nazism (with some propaganda against the plutocratic democracies), to cold hostility and finally to open warfare against Nazism. All this took place in spite of lack of popularity, imprisonments, intrigues and firing squads. The importance of this fact must be stressed to indicate how this totalitarian party, thanks to its psychology and organizational methods, brings a new element into history.

At the time of France's liberation, the Communist Party disposed of powerful troops in the heart of the Resistance movement. The Socialists, however, had armed militias only in Northern France; elsewhere in the country, they had joined various organizations which were often

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under the leadership of the Communist Party, a thing which made them feel most uneasy.

Could the Resistance hope to gain power and become the source of a revolution? It had neither the indispensable leaders nor the backing of the people. The Resistance demanded just retribution, and this worried a majority of French who had not taken an active, visible and recognizable part in the fight against Nazism. The Resistance was divided. Radicals, Socialists, members of the right, all admitted the heroism of the Communists but feared their leadership and turncoat policy. The Communist Party styled itself "The Party of the Hostages," the true national party and, in addition to this, the party of Red Army victories and of the Soviet Union's future international influence. Too many aces and too many marked cards! But with Allied troops on French soil, the Communist Party could no longer resort to a *coup de force* and had little interest in starting a lot of trouble. The Communists claimed the right to keep their arms, but then consented to having their armed groups transferred to an auxiliary police. After all, it is of vital interest to them to gain positions within the police force.

A well disciplined minority, backed by a powerful organization, can easily control a large number of well-intentioned men who, for a certain amount of time, may not even realize that they are being completely controlled. Under the pressure of the Communist Party, which was acting through the intermediary of the Resistance, the elected institutions of Paris were replaced by a council under the presidency of the Communist scholar Langevin. On the day that Paris was liberated, two Communist dailies, *l'Humanité* and *Ce Soir,* were being sold on the streets. It must be admitted that the strongest political press is now owned by the Communist Party. Part of the Spanish Maquis, in Southern France, was under the influence of the Communist Party which, in the name of the *Junta Suprema de Liberacion* and *Union Nacional,* attempted to gain control of the entire colony of Spanish exiles. It failed in this attempt, but Dr. Negrin, the only legal owner of Spain's gold reserve which now lies in Moscow's vaults, still has some strong arguments on this point. The "Free German Committee" was finally recognized by the French Forces of the Interior and was permitted to use their radio facilities.

The Maquis in the Limoges area was under the command of both the Communist writer André Malraux and the fellow-traveller André Chamson. It came to light that, among the writers of French clandestine literature, a jack-of-all-trades like Louis Aragon could enjoy a tremendous influence. This Aragon is the man who wrote the infamous propaganda during the Moscow trials, who hid all the crimes of his party during the Spanish Civil War and even in France, for instance the kidnapping and murder of Rudolf Klement in Paris in 1938. This same Aragon today has the audacity to demand that André Gide be ostracized.

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At the same time, artistic circles were informed that Picasso had formally joined the Communist Party, and scientists such as Joliot-Curie and Langevin invested the Communist Party with an intellectual aura. Communist tendencies were also predominant within the *Confederation Generale du Travail,* where the position of secretary-general fell to Benoit Frachon of the Party Executive. Etc.

But the *Front National,* which was definitely under Communist influence, was opposed by the *Mouvement de Liberation Nationale,* which includes a few former and present members of the Right, such as d'Astier de la Vigerie, numerous socialists and trade-union men and a pro-Communist minority; and this movement decided to strengthen the Socialist Party by joining it as one man. The pro-Communist elements reacted by suggesting the merging of the two important groups of the Resistance. So far, they have failed in this attempt. In the meantime, with the restoration of political parties, the influence of the Resistance has decreased.

It is generally admitted that the Radical Party has lost a great deal of its prestige, but it still has enough power to regroup conservative elements. The Socialist Party has reappeared with renewed vitality and seized control of the municipal governments of large Southern communities, such as Marseilles and Toulouse, and now publishes again the Party daily *Le Populaire*; this party can count on the loyalty of the working classes and its active members at times insist that it is the most popular party, which I am inclined to believe. The Socialist Party has also become the natural haven of middle class people who have developed in the direction of a moderate socialism. The language of this party is honest and firm, without novelty or verve, very careful, no doubt too careful. It is very friendly towards the Communists, but deeply suspicious of them. The two parties have now formed a "Committee of Co-ordination," though at a very late stage in the game. The formation of a committee of organic unity, whose work will be anything but easy, has also been announced. The Socialists doubt very much whether unity between believers in democracy and totalitarians would lead to anything but the domination of the former by the latter. There are, however, the weighty arguments of foreign policy in favor of this.

The Christian Democrat Movement (*Mouvement Republicain Populaire*), is young and vigorous. Its members include Georges Bidault, Teitgen and Francois de Menthon, all three of whom are members of the Provisional French Government. Its framework consists of intelligent but disinterested men such as those of the pre-war *Esprit* group, and it is backed by the Christian unions and can count on some support from the Vatican.

The pre-war revolutionary minorities are no longer in favor. The *Parti Ouvrier et Paysan* (PSOP), founded in 1938-1939 by Marceau Pivert, Lucien Hérard, Daniel Guérin, Collinet and several thousand

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dissidents of the Socialist Party, lost the bulk of its membership and leaders as a result of internal crises. Now it has only a few scattered groups left. The two microscopic Trotskyite groups have merged, but together they numbered only a few hundred members throughout all of France, including five hundred in Paris. The Revolutionary Syndicalists, once very active, are now dispersed in the CGT and have not really resumed their activities. The *Fédérer et Libérer* group, which is composed of members of the revolutionary left of various tendencies, has only one member in the Consultative Assembly. It should be noted that the anti-Stalinist left has lost many qualified active members whose ideological weakness predisposed them to collaborating with the Nazis. Thus, in the CGT, the old miner Dumoulin and the bureaucratic team Belin-Froideval all deserted to the Nazis; among the writers men as remarkable as the two pacifists Felicien Challaye and Emery did the same. It really seems as if not a single French publication, with perhaps the exception of the confidential Trotskyite publication *Vérité,* can now allow itself to criticize totalitarian regimes and the international policy of the Soviet Union.

One of the striking traits of French opinion is its traditionalism. The old political formations which have been resurrected use their good old language of the past. Few new names have yet come to light. The secretary general of the Socialist Party, Daniel Meyer, and the leftist Catholic George Bidault, must be mentioned among the new political leaders. Thorez, Marcel Cachin, Marty, Jacques Duclos, Florimond Bonté, Frachon, have resumed their activities within the Communist Party in France. But for the time being, there is neither any striking ideological rejuvenation nor any change in personnel. And the vital problems of social reorganization have scarcely been stated. Intellectual life must, without doubt, first be resumed, and the masses must really be called upon to state what they want through elections and union activity before men and ideas can be brought forth. But above all, one must first do away with the anxieties of cold, of privations and of the war that goes on.

The spectre of terror has disappeared. There were some 150,000 arrests, which is no great figure, and very few executions. Those who called for a prompt and pitiless cleansing, either in a spirit of retribution or for political reasons (it was nothing but a claim to power), came up against insurmountable barriers. The price of life remains very high in France. An execution is an event and, after the Nazi massacres, this is a most healthy psychological trait. Furthermore, such terrorism would have threatened the majority of Frenchmen who do not in any way feel guilty of having been subjected to German occupation and the Vichy regime. Finally, a large number of the true pro-Nazis declared that they had helped the Resistance, that they had played a double game, and

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this is often the truth. Such a situation presents rather difficult questions. The influential newspapers which served the Nazi cause have not yet been formally confiscated. Every capitalist who is charged with collaboration proves that he "protected his workers," and produced for the Wehrmacht only to "save French industrial equipment." The profiteers of defeat and treason have kept their booty.

The nationalization of the mines in Northern France and the commandeering of the Renault factories are symbolical gestures, serious at that. The large-scale measures of economic planning and nationalization, still remain on the agenda but the government apparently wants to await the election results and the end of the war; in short, to gain time while remaining indecisive, all of which favors the survivors of the influential bourgeoisie and the profiteers of darker times. The French Government is obviously afraid of displeasing the Allies and of entering a period of internal crisis in the course of which it would remain to be seen whether the Communist Party would lean towards social planning or toward a maximum restoration of capitalism. As for the Communist Party itself, it does not even know the answer to this question and has no power to decide upon it.

The new Franco-Soviet pact did not bring forth anything very substantial in its polished text and only repeats the policy of a similar pact that Pierre Laval concluded in Moscow in 1935. This agreement was, however, hailed by all parties without exception as a great diplomatic achievement. Its main result was the appeasement of the Communist Party which, within a few days, returned to very moderate language. Stabilization and procrastination of internal politics have been given new life. For the time being, there is much more talk of rebuilding France as a military power than of social and economic reorganization. But this military strength will be used against whom, and why? Germany of tomorrow will be crushed. The war effort, however, allows the postponement of other plans, and finds its justification in the following reasoning: If we do not resume our position as a military power, we risk being treated in the same way as the small nations. Another point: a strong army would necessarily become an important factor in internal politics, and might even decide, in case of civil war, between public opinion and the government. Survivors of the Right can hope to find good jobs in the high command, and the party in power, acting in accordance with a certain foreign policy, and using totalitarian ways, can build high hopes on the existence of a strong army.

On the other hand, it is also obvious that if France is resuming the production of arms, she has no illusions on the possibility of a world organization capable of assuring her security. France is consciously sacrificing the possibility of rapidly resuming a high standard of living.

In conclusion, let us summarize what I have said. Firstly, no large political movement will be able to make itself known without the support

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of the totalitarian Communist Party; and if it does make itself known through this party, it cannot fail to fall under its leadership. Secondly, the socially conscious masses of the working class and of the middle class are aware of this fact, and many of their elements are ready to join transitional platforms with the moderates, who include many conservatives, because they fear Stalinist Communism. Thirdly, the French government is therefore attempting to gain time and to heal the worst evils of the present day. It is showing caution and believes that France's destiny is bound to world events whose outcome is not yet in sight. Fourthly, one feels the need for a social transformation, for a revolution, which one hopes to achieve at the lowest cost, since the idea of civil war remains very unpopular.

A return to universal suffrage gives hope that a high majority will pronounce itself in favor of a decisive change in the economic structure of the country. But in this case, the moderating influence of women's votes is feared.

If, and everything points in this direction, the German people are finally reduced to complete impotence, France and her Mediterranean neighbors, Italy and Spain, will be called upon to become the vast social laboratories of the continent and the great changes which can be foreseen will probably take place in hitherto unknown forms, completely different from those of the social struggles that followed the first World War.

Postscript

I have received news directly from France, news which shows a rather pessimistic state of mind. Rumor has it that the Allied Powers are opposed to the energetic measures of nationalization and social planning which might satisfy the claims of social justice, give France a new prestige and facilitate the beginning of reconstruction. One must suppose that the economic reconstruction of France will be the source of many conflicts and strong pressures. Friends write me that: "This will be the era of the bureaux, of secret services, and of opportunistic careerists who offer themselves to all sides." I should add that my friends do not belong to the category of the discouraged—on the contrary. The very day of the Yalta Conference, the provisional Government decided to convert Dakar into a "formidable military, naval and air base." The issue for the 24th of February of *Pour La Victoire,* which publishes this fact, also contains a remarkable article by Jules Romains declaring that the French who, after the First World War, spoke glibly of the end of all wars, now speak glibly of "the next war." The French at the outposts of European civilization take into account the fact that the end of the war against Nazism and Japan will probably bring no solution to the problems of imperialist rivalries, of totalitarianism, of international security; and they see that under these conditions the necessary social transformations will be infinitely difficult and perilous.

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Art Chronicle

"BELIEVE, ME, Southey! . . . " Coleridge wrote in a letter to his friend, August 7th, 1803, "I almost think that ideas never *recall* ideas, as far as they are ideas, any more than leaves in a forest create each other's motion. The breeze it is that runs through them—it is the soul, the state of feeling." And though it may seem a wide leap there is scarcely a sounder explanation of what makes so-called abstract painting and sculpture equally as moving as the more familiar descriptive forms, and leaves imitative or academic versions of either, dead. It is certainly something of the sort which animates Mondrian's simplicity and Brancusi's condensations of form. And if we take the word "feeling," as I. A. Richards does in *Coleridge on Imagination,* to signify "all these motions in the mind by which the projected objects of our perceptions and thoughts are invested with more characters than those required in practical affairs," what better explanation of the provocative effect of Marcel Duchamp's *Ready-Mades* could we find—for example his snow-shovel at present hanging in the Yale University Art Gallery inscribed in white paint along the edge of its blade "In advance of the broken arm"?

This "breeze" of Coleridge's letter is imagination. And another example of its power to bring form to life is the work of the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti recently shown at Art of this Century in New York. In fact it is what makes Giacometti one of the two or three leading sculptors of his generation. It is a quality which Henry Moore realizes in his work in England and which Alexander Calder achieves in this country: a poetry of form—suggestion without specific allusions. With none of these three sculptors does the abstract shape remain merely a geometrical element. And with Giacometti in particular, as in the work of the somewhat older Hans Arp, we have a clear return to the heart—Coleridge's "feeling"—the individual emotion.

The trouble with much of abstract art today is the same trouble every important development in the arts encounters sooner or later: It has attracted to its following talents lacking in essential creative ability, satisfied to tag along after the leaders. True abstract artists like Mondrian, Brancusi or the constructivist Antoine Pevsner arrive at their condensations of form through a legitimate need to sum up exterior life in such a style. But their followers looking only at the result feel there is no longer any need to turn to the world of appearances, even by allusion; in fact, they exert every effort to keep their work from its contamination. This self-imposed isolation from life prevents them from enjoying the benefits of those sentiments which the artist's emotion normally translates into the plastic beauty of his work—its vitality, as-

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surance and seeming inevitability. As a consequence their syntheses turn to mere arrangements, their style into a formula.

In 1912 Marcel Duchamp realized that the researches of the cubists and the further simplifications of form which were growing out of them threatened just such a danger. He felt that painting and sculpture had too long concerned themselves with physical appearances. The imagination had been slighted. The abuse went all the way back to Courbet. Courbet was the master whom the cubists hailed as their forerunner. It was he, according to Gleizes and Metzinger in their book *Cubism,* who "inaugurated a realistic impulse which runs through all modern efforts." And Duchamp had come to feel it was time for a turn-about. Painting, as he expressed it, should once again "be put at the service of the mind." It was this recall of the imagination on Duchamp's part that paved the way through Dada and Surrealism, to work such as Giacometti's.

And in Giacometti we have the ideal combination of a thoroughly aware abstractionist and fantasist, or sentimentalist in the best sense of that word. He is an artist who knows his metier. His father was a painter. Giacometti also began as one and worked through various styles from the pointillist to the expressionist. But apparently his temperament demanded a tighter idiom and from the time he left painting for sculpture while still practically a boy, he has persisted in his effort to perfect one. Even in his mature work, such as that shown at Art of this Century, we still find the craftsman always striving for a greater precision, a greater refinement, never satisfied that he has achieved the full expression at which he is aiming. He has, however, the gift of conveying a sense of living reality through the barest essential form, without any reliance whatsoever on literal description. His simplifications are scrupulous condensations—never shortcuts, carefully studied intensifications of volume and surface relationships. And still he never allows these material simplifications to interfere with the suggestion of emotional overtones in his sculpture, whether it be the Kafkan tragedy of *Woman With a Cut Throat;* the maternal sentiment of *Disagreeable Object;* or the lyric, dream atmosphere of *Palace at 4 A. M.*

A similar hospitality to the imagination, oddly enough, has characterized much of the more individual work by younger painters shown in New York this season. Word from Paris indicates that the tendency there among young artists during the occupation was to follow the lead of such masters as Bonnard, Matisse and Picasso—all painters in the "physical tradition" according to Duchamp's distinction. In this country, on the other hand, during the same years, there has been a definite trend away from this path. Here the tendency has been rather in an expressionist direction, or at least toward a greater freedom of brush work and a more excited compositional organization than is customarily

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found in the work of these French leaders. And at the same time there has been increasing regard paid to imagination and to allusionistic structures in painting, leaning more toward "literary" suggestion than toward austere abstraction.

Such a trend was already evident in the work of Morris Graves four years ago. A linearism was always the foundation of his composition—a seeming automatic, free-running line which wove endlessly in and out, back and forth until a recognizable form grew out of it. His color washes added the emotional overtone he wished for his subject, which always embodied a subtle allusiveness, and usually took the shape of a symbolic animal fantasy. This year at the Willard Gallery, Graves' paintings were larger in scale and stronger in color. But there was that same imaginative emphasis which gave his earlier work its appeal, perhaps with an increase in subtlety in proportion to his increase in scale and with an exchange of his earlier, more obvious animal symbolism for strange dead landscapes and lone visionary trees.

In Arshile Gorky's one man show at the Julien Levy Gallery there was little trace of his old interest in following the Paris leaders or of the stress on the abstract which used to mark his work. His latest oils, products of last summer, were translations of natural forms along the lines of the crayon studies he had brought back from Virginia the year before; a transmutation of grass and flower forms into a pictorial world of allusive ambiguity. His color was applied more freely than in his painstaking emulations of Picasso and Miro several years ago and a new vitality and spontaneity came with this independence.

Again, Jackson Pollock's work at Art of this Century marked a similar advance—perhaps not so wide a step ahead of his last year's work as Gorky's. Nevertheless, there was a more consistent achievement evident in it than in last year's—a greater confidence in the direction he is following and no loss of vitality in the imaginative compositions which he seems to draw out of the paint on the canvas through a wild brushing rather than out of his own mind. Pollock's approach is a new type of fevered automatism which, in his most successful works, he succeeds in organizing into a compositional unity before the impasto becomes too thick and too muddied.

And in Matta's latest work shown at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, not only the greatest changes of approach of any of these young men is evident, but also the boldest reliance on suggestion and allusion in subject matter. The Turneresque dream landscapes painted from a palette dominated by "shocking pink" and the personalization of Duchamp's influence in Matta's work of the last few years, has now given way to monumental Rimbaudian graffiti, weirdly sulphuric in tone, sexual or sadistic in representation—as "literary" and imaginative as they are successful as painting, and disquieting.

JAMES J. SWEENEY

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Courtesy Nierendorf Gallery, New York

STANLEY WILLIAM HAYTER. Figure. Ink drawing, 1945.

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Drama Now

ERIC RUSSELL BENTLEY

WITH THE help of a sheaf of recently printed plays* I shall try in this review to identify and characterise several different levels of dramatic art as it now exists.

There are some of course who believe that plays are not meant to be silently read any more than musical scores. Unlike music, however, drama is conceived and recorded in words. The theatrical director is simply an interpreter of the dramatist's words. Since every reader of a play is a self-appointed director with a theatre in his own mind I propose to assume that the well-equipped reader can experience and appraise the play in his study and that a play which is bad to read is a bad play. Good literature may be bad drama *but the converse does not hold*. It is a pity Charles Lamb did not see the philistine inference which would be drawn from his assertion that much great dramatic literature was not theatre: it was that great theatre is not literature. Hence the unfavorable overtones in the word "theatrical" and in the word "literary." Actually, to call plays "too theatrical," as we do, is like calling sugar too sweet; but so is calling plays "too literary."

The proof that the anti-literary drama pundits do not mean what they say is that they print plays. A printed play may of course be used as a memento of a pleasurable evening in the theatre—*used* but scarcely *evaluated*. This is hard on the critic. Confronted with a printed play he has little excuse for airing his knowledge of actors, electricians, designers, directors, producers and box-office managers. The only man to be praised or blamed is the man who on Broadway is happily protected or unhappily buried by all these: the author. Let us consider some current authors in inverse order of merit.

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*S.R.O.: THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PLAYS IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN STAGE. *Compiled by Bennett Cerf and Van H. Cartmell. Doubleday, Doran.* $3.75. ONE TOUCH OF VENUS. *By S. J. Perelman and Ogden Nash. Little, Brown.* $2.00. ANNA LUCASTA. *By Phillip Yordan. Random House.* $2.00. JACOBOWSKY AND THE COLONEL. *By Franz Werfel. Viking.* $2.00. GET AWAY OLD MAN. *By William Saroyan. Harcourt, Brace.* $2.00. FOUR PLAYS. *By J. B. Priestley. Harper's.* $2.50. RED ROSES FOR ME. *By Sean O'Casey. Macmillan.* $2.00.

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2.

Oscar Hammerstein deserves first place on any such list. His work *Oklahoma!* (the exclamation mark is his own) has been "hailed" as a new genre, praised in at least one literary quarterly, awarded a Pulitzer Prize by special dispensation, and not unfavorably compared with *The Magic Flute*. It is probably the outstanding theatrical success of the war; and it is entirely representative of current trends. In fact it belongs with the new Americanism in being folksy and so damned wholesome; and also in being trite, cocksure, sentimental and vacuous. On the stage the thing is decked out in gay color and from time to time enlivened by tricky dancing. But in all drama, including musical drama, color and dancing are only embellishment; in this case the embellishment of a scarecrow.**

But perhaps it is beside the point to apply any critical criteria. *Oklahoma!* came to me in an anthology edited by Bennett Cerf and Van H. Cartmell who in their foreword endorse Lee Schubert's remark that "the box office never lies." They continue as follows: "It is fashionable to poke fun at public taste, and to hold that no really good play can be a financial success. The record, spread out on the following pages, does not support such a theory." Spread out on the following pages are the worst plays I have ever read, such as *East Lynne*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *The Bat*. Of their three most recent choices—*Life with Father*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *Oklahoma!*—the editors write: "That they are, from any viewpoint, the soundest and most thoroughly representative of their type is an encouraging augury to lovers of the theatre." Consequently: "American playwrights and American audiences can face the future with high hopes and light hearts." No voice more authentically philistine has been heard since Matthew Arnold cited a Victorian's prayer that "our unrivalled happiness may last." With light hearts and heavy purses the 100% American playwrights and the 100% American audiences are to enjoy the best of all possible theatres. The box office never lies, and when asked how good these three plays were it replied with aplomb: Two million dollars apiece.

3.

To move from Hammerstein to S. J. Perelman and Ogden Nash is to move one rung up the cultural ladder. But only one. If *Oklahoma!* is Broadway's idea of folk art, *One Touch of Venus* is Broad-

** Unlike James Agee I saw *Oklahoma!* on the stage. Anyway what Agee said about it was true. You don't have to visit the Sahara to know what it's like.

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way being oh so sophisticated. If the word folksy connotes the adulteration of the folk spirit, our current understanding of sophistication implies an adulteration of the comic spirit. The sophistication of *One Touch of Venus* is the cleverness of the half-educated. It is crudity ill-concealed by quasi-refinement. It is a guffaw suppressed to a snigger. *One Touch of Venus,* as the title alluringly hints, deals with sex or rather, to retain the original metaphor, it touches on sex, and nothing reveals its character more than than the way it fingers Venus without coming to grips with her. Nothing in the realm of humor is more acceptable than bawdry; nothing to my mind is less acceptable than the Broadway sophistication which pleases old ladies by avoiding outspokenness and at the same time titillates young ladies by cowardly insinuations. You may find it funny to hear a woman sing:

Venus found she was a goddess
In a world controlled by gods
So she opened up her bodice
And equalized the odds.

But the very next stanza tells us:

Look what Beatrice did to Dante
What Dubarry did to France
Venus showed them that the pantie
Is mightier than the pants.

And after that there are forty more lines of it. As to Mr. Perelman's prose, it consists of humor on this order:

RODNEY. *You're practically naked! I can see your*—form!
VENUS: *Don't you like my—form?*

The idea is to mention sex as often as possible because sex is very funny but not to call anything by its name because that wouldn't be very nice. Perelman, Nash, and their audiences (not forgetting Kurt Weill who used to be a musician) are nothing if not knowing. Why, they even know who Dante and Beatrice were.

Which brings me to a second point about *One Touch of Venus* —the nature of its burlesque. Burlesque and parody may be aimed at the most august object, but they must imply an understanding of the object. Unhappily we get the impression that Perelman and Nash and the kind of audience they address do not. The humor of

Giotto and Watteau
Were obviously blotto . . .
Cezanne and Modigliani
De-glamorized the human fanny

betrays, not quite intentionally perhaps, that hostility to culture which

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is a leading theme, overtly or not, of New York wit. The audience recalls having heard those queer French and Italian names in college (this audience is very collegiate) and how silly they sound when shown up by artists whom the veracious box office approves! The burlesque humor of Perelman and Nash is polysyllabic and allusive in form; its gist, its ground base, is a bronx cheer to culture.

4.

On the next rung of the ladder we find plays in which some attention is paid to certain perennial tasks of the drama such as telling the truth about people's lives and problems. My specimen is a play which has been called "the most important event in our native American drama in twenty years," *Anna Lucasta* by "an extremely successful writer in Hollywood," Philip Yordan. Mr. Yordan doesn't always tell the truth (he isn't a box office) but he does take a look at people and their problems. A Harlem family plans to get the money of a young Negro just arrived from the South by marrying him off to one of their number who has hitherto been a prostitute. Being one of those soulful whores she falls in love with the boy in earnest. The wedding day arrives but before nightfall the father has revealed the whole story of Anna to the boy's family. In despair Anna returns to her whoring without waiting to consult her bridegroom. A tragic ending is indicated. But Mr. Yordan learnt all about endings in Hollywood. The public, which after all is barely one remove from the box office, demands happy ones. Clearly the hero of the play has to be soulful too. He must still want to marry Anna in spite of everything, and her attempts at suicide must fail. The play ends on the proverbial note of hope.

It would be no use telling Mr. Yordan it won't do. He knows it will. He knows the truth from the one who never lies. A critic called the play "a combination of *Anna Christie* and *You Can't Take It With You.*" And what a combination that is! All the pleasures of the sordid with no morbid, mournful, modernistic, conclusion. And can Mr. Yordan write slick dialogue? A machine couldn't do it better. And does Mr. Yordan love the Negro people? His original choice was a Polish-American milieu but, says the jacket, "eventually he was persuaded to shift the locale to Harlem." And can Mr. Yordan see the importance of persuasion? Negroes are lovable. They're nasty too, and you can put coarser words in their mouths than Broadway would otherwise accept. And they're always marrying prostitutes. Oh yes, Mr. Yordan knows the truth.

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5.

On the next rung is Franz Werfel. He knows more about life than Mr. Yordan and probably wouldn't tell so many deliberate lies about it; his specialty is not deceiving others but deceiving himself. Werfel is therefore the first author so far mentioned who might conceivably be considered highbrow. By some he is still considered an artist. He is one of the few living writers whom professors in German Departments have heard of. A long time ago he wrote a play about a monster, which, being unrealistic, invited highbrow attention and settings by arty designers. Werfel was once known for such lyrics as the one that opens: "My only wish is to be related to Thee, O Man!" Today he is known for *Song of Bernadette, Embezzled Heaven,* and a philosophical work which *The Nation* did not allow me to ignore last fall.

The Werfel play of the times is *Jacobowsky and the Colonel,* adapted to Broadway by Mr. Behrman, who is obviously cut out for the job, and now published in a professorial translation which shows that Werfel is not much worse than Behrman. The printed play adds to the Broadway version, if my memory serves me, a symbolic interpolation of St. Francis and the Wandering Jew, two gentlemen whom Mr. Werfel loves to pose as. Adapted or restored, acted or printed, it is a dreadful play. Only the subtitle—Comedy of a Tragedy—is apt, for one is embarrassed throughout by all this fooling and footling in the midst of death. I never would have thought—till I witnessed it—that an audience could so enjoy the fall of France.

6.

On the next rung—if I may blaspheme against the box office—come two writers whose most recent works have either failed on Broadway or have not appeared there at all: William Saroyan and J. B. Priestley. For all the evident differences between them these two playwrights are fundamentally of the same caliber. Equally energetic, talented, missionary, they are faced by the same dilemmas, the dilemmas of the middlebrow, the dilemmas of the writer who is gifted but not supremely gifted, the man who, being a small artist, knows he might be a large entertainer, the man whose seriousness is all too easily compromised by his knowledge that he will reach a broader public if he is not *too* serious.

Saroyan tries to sell his stuff by direct self-advertisement and by disclaiming high intentions. "*Get Away Old Man,*" he writes, "is an

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American play and nothing else. It was conceived, written, and produced solely to entertain." It closed after thirteen nights on Broadway. In presenting to the American public four recent plays, none of which Broadway has produced, J. B. Priestley takes the opposite line of protesting that "New York deliberately prefers to produce what is left of our [i.e. British] drawing-room stuff instead of bolder and more original work." Obviously both Saroyan and Priestley wish to be at once entertaining and artistic, and nothing could be more laudable if, in their desire to please everybody, they were not ignoring the cultural stratification of modern society—the rungs of our ladder. This is no mere error in their publicity. It is a mistake that vitiates most of their work. If a certain earnestness prevents them from stepping down to the lowest rungs of the ladder, a fear of minority culture, a yearning to be taken to the bosom of the public, limits their thinking and their sensibility. Occasionally, as in the movie *The Human Comedy,* Saroyan does step down to the lowest rungs. And when he hops back into place he is bewildered and unsure: his latest play even has a bitter ending! But all Saroyan's work is flabby inside, sentimental at the center, because he is in his work a moral and aesthetic coward. Choices are refused. Distinctions are obliterated. All substance melts into the ocean of sentiment. "The whole world's gone mad," says the protagonist in *Get Away Old Man,* "and no man knows who is innocent or guilty." What a staggering lie! To know nothing, according to Saroyan, is also to forgive everything.

Priestley finds what may be the only exit into speculation that is open to this class of philosophers: occultism. In the early 'thirties he wrote phoney plays about eternal recurrence as expounded by the egregious J. W. Dunne. Today he offers us a play about "an extra-sensory or second-sight relationship" and three socio-political plays calculated to make you what New Yorkers are now calling "PM happy." They lack a dialectic of ideas and of artistic structure. They might almost be by J. Donald Adams. Priestley also is the kind of man who has his picture taken with a pipe in his hand.

Saroyan and Priestley are the two prime instances in the dramatic world of highbrows trying to be lowbrows without losing caste. Hence their exaggerated hominess, their forced simplicity, their patriotism and insistent local color, their chronic fear of the esoteric. It is interesting to note what comes of their attempt to speak to everybody on everybody's behalf: they speak to the lower middle classes (socially *and* culturally speaking) and they express the lower middle class mentality.

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7.

Sean O'Casey's proper place is on the top rung of the ladder. Today, however, his foothold is not so sure and occasionally he lowers at least one foot to a rung below. Lest anyone suspect that I consider O'Casey corrupted by "Stalinism," I had better admit that his reported editorship of the London *Daily Worker* is to me neither here nor there. Indeed it is regrettable that his American publishers have too timorously omitted to bring out *The Star Turns Red* (London, 1940), O'Casey's best play since *Within the Gates* and probably the best communist play in English. Instead they have given us *Purple Dust* (1942) and *Red Roses For Me* (1944).

Both plays are full of good things. The former abounds in an unforced humor that puts to shame both the folksy and the sophisticated schools of Broadway. Even the somber *Red Roses For Me* contains such exquisite characters as little Eeada who comes in carrying a statue of the Virgin Mary and quietly asks: "Could you spare a pinch or two of your Hudson's Soap, Mrs. Breydon, dear, to give the Blessed Virgin a bit of a wash?" For the rest, the play is another projection of O'Casey's staple subject: Dublin. This statement is the key to its strength and its weakness. Its strength lies in familiar O'Casey virtues—rich dialogue, strong situation, deeply-felt characters, stark contrasts of mood and texture. The weakness of the piece is its failure to exist in its own right: it is made up of pieces of the O'Casey we already know.

In fact it might be said of all O'Casey's later plays that they indicate no clear line of development, only the occasional introduction of a new technic, new plots, a re-grouping of elements, a more emphatic doctrine. The bad judgment of W. B. Yeats, known to all who consult *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse,* was also responsible for O'Casey's rejection by the Abbey Theatre. In England he has found communism but not a new art. One cannot welcome his turning to autobiography. His *recherche du temps perdu* is inhibiting his development. In this vein he is not a Proust; the sentimentalist, always latent in him, comes to the fore; in *Red Roses for Me* his prose poetry becomes verbiage.

Or do I pick on O'Casey unfairly? What has *any* dramatist achieved since 1939? The artistic theatre has always led a dog's life, but for some time now it has hardly existed at all, except possibly in Ireland where O'Casey is no longer welcome.

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8.

Devotees of the drama probably have a pretty clear notion of the course of dramatic history in recent decades. The years 1880-1914 saw the most significant crop of plays since Schiller if not since Molière. In the years 1919-1933 these plays were splendidly produced, especially in Germany and Russia, along with new plays along lines which the earlier generation had laid down. The last dozen years have not been so creative. Fascism has swept the continent; Socialist Realism produced no important dramatist in Russia; in England and America there were minor experiments in social drama and poetic drama. Of course the cry of a theatrical renascence was raised. It always is. But where is Clifford Odets today? Where is the Federal Theatre? The last war, some one will say, introduced a lively decade of theatre, why shouldn't this one? The answer, I feel, is that the last war was immediately preceded by Ibsen and Strindberg on whose steam the next generation could forge ahead. Between the generations such a man as Max Reinhardt was an essential link. This time the links, or most of them, have been broken. The most one can say is that the theatre at present fulfills the first pre-condition of renascence. It is dead.

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Books

IN AND OUT OF THE WAR

THE PERPETUAL gloom in which book reviewers, like blind fish, go about their business may soon deprive them of all power to discriminate among virtues and leave them with nothing more than a rudimentary sense of the hierarchy of faults. So when I say that Alex Comfort's *The Power House* is the best of the novels on my list,* I mean that its faults are of a high order. Genuine literary blemishes, in a perspective as dim and vacant as the present, acquire a surrogate beauty, vindicated by default. No recent novel by a young writer has been so serious and ambitious in its effort.

Comfort takes naturalism so literally that he makes it look like something else. He is apparently aware that he is going over trodden ground, and that he cannot simply follow his predecessors with straight face and solemn fidelity. He therefore loads his document with all the weight it can bear, as if to justify his presence in a school by outdoing the masters. Thus, when he writes of the textile industries in pre-war France, the war, the rout and the aftermath, it is with an exhaustive documentation, no stone unturned, no sound or movement overlooked, the misplaced laboriousness of an industrial accountant who takes an inventory to be a history of culture.

Fougueux, the novel's first protagonist, is an engineer, master of La Virginie, the machine that distributes power through the textile mills. Comfort's purpose is to show the complete dominance of the metal woman, the monstrous power engine, over the man who tends her, and by extension, the domination of the entire modern industrial plant over culture, country and countryside. Fougueux suffers from psychic impotence induced by several unsuccessful sexual attempts in his early adolescence and reinforced by repeated failures as an adult. He lives in fear of incompetence (death in the factory, ridicule in life), fear of not being able to meet the demands of a woman and his whole sexual satisfaction is derived symbolically from his success in meeting the demands of a machine. La Virginie becomes a sexual thing down to the touch and odor of her body, a woman riveted in a bed of incessant activity, a complete erotic object whose very sounds, when some

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* THE POWER HOUSE. *By Alex Comfort. Viking Press.* $3. APARTMENT IN ATHENS. *By Glenway Wescott. Harper.* $2.50. AGE OF THUNDER. *By Frederic Prokosch. Harper.* $2.50. THE END OF ALL MEN. *By C. F. Ramuz. Pantheon.* $2.50. THE GHOSTLY LOVER. *By Elizabeth Hardwick. Harcourt.* $2.50. CANNERY ROW. *By John Steinbeck. Viking Press.* $2.

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of her screws need tightening, mimic the soft cries of intercourse that Fougueux overhears at home. The engineer overcomes his impotence in the army, significantly enough during the German breakthrough: the machine has been destroyed.

But by that time Fougueux has ceased to matter and his symbolic victory, coincident with the actual defeat of society, occurs as an anti-climax. Lt. Vernier takes over and it is through him that Comfort passes judgment on the society and the war that he has been documenting. Vernier emerges from the French disaster an anarcho-pacifist. It is the dutiful citizens "who are making the world a desert." In their obedience to the state they become lunatics who do the dirty work of history with a sense of the highest moral duty. "A Pole is being beaten—we rush to help him, and every foot we put down goes smack into some innocent person's face." If a man is to remain sane—and the few sane men are the world's last hope—he must disassociate himself from the state and from violence. Vernier, like Hemingway's hero in the last war, makes a separate peace. But in occupied Paris he lets himself be dragged back into the dirty work—he participates in the dynamiting of a troop train. This, like all acts of violence, results in the useless murder of innocents, no soldiers having been aboard.

About the best thing that can be said for Comfort's brand of pacifism is that it acknowledges the momentum of violence. He does not argue that a war, once it has begun, can be stopped by any of the known pacifist techniques. But this merely indicates the greatest weakness of his pacifism and what it is that makes it worthless as practical politics. The state is something to be ducked, rather than changed; war is a thing to be avoided, rather than destroyed—and it is the individual, the solitary self, who alone is sane, who is to do the ducking and the avoiding. All else is lunacy. Whatever its attractions as a personal attitude, this tends to reduce politics to draft-dodging.

The weakness of his political position is, I think, more than any other factor responsible for Comfort's failure to maintain throughout the novel the weighted specific documentation that he brings to the description of factory life. When he enters an upper-class drawing room, or attends a military reception, he is no longer so sure of the social evil as he is among the monsters of modern technology. In the railroad yards, in the slaughter house, among the mills and furnaces the facts are plain and the moral is obvious: anarchism is the only possible attitude toward the utter mechanization of life. And here, to drive home his point, he describes every conceivable mechanical and industrial motion: trains, cranes, planes, wheels, belts, shuttles, etc., etc., and even natural and household objects are introduced to complete the catalogue of human bewilderment. (These rhythms converge in a particularly dizzy passage where Fougueux visits the girl with whom he is attempting intercourse). The results of so much motion are most commonly observed on board

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ship, and their literary analogue can be equally depressing. At best you feel yourself inside a giant clock, observing every quiver of the wheels and springs, but unable to see the simple resultant motion of the hands. The scenes get cluttered up, and dramatic focus is almost impossible to maintain. In fact, *The Power House* is at times unreadable; which, all to its credit, does not make it one bit less worth reading.

In *Apartment in Athens* Glenway Wescott takes quite a fall from *Pilgrim Hawk,* losing all the personal intensity and authenticity that distinguished his writing in the earlier novel. The present book's failure to come to life suggests that Greece, our common cultural Eden, has become, for Americans, at any rate, a country as foreign and irrelevant as Patagonia. Wescott's Athens is an anachronism, and the Parthenon, of which he gives us a glimpse to establish the glory that was Greece, a ruined bank building. Thus based on a faded notion of antiquity, Wescott's Greeks are incapable of doing anything to resist their present humiliation beyond reciting the old lessons of esthetic harmony. The Greeks of today, however, find not so much a means of consolation in their ancient culture, as a source of perpetual scorn for barbarians. They are the most scornful people on earth, as they have a right to be—if they are the curators of the museum, the rest of mankind are no better than tourists. But Helianos, in whose apartment the action takes place, is presented as a reasonable (and inoffensive) man, without salt, pepper or bitterness, whose whole response to Kalter, the German officer quartered in his house, is governed by the Socratic maxim *gnothi seauton* and the Aristotelian virtue of moderation. All of which is as remote from the present realities of Greek life as Pericles is from King George.

If Wescott's Greeks are pedantic, his Germans are conceived in terms of popular *Völkerkunde.* Captain Kalter begins as a typical Prussian, bullying his hosts. After thoroughly intimidating them, he makes a trip to Germany, where he learns that his whole family has been killed, and returns a chastened man. But Kalter is incapable of genuine sorrow or remorse—his kindliness proves to be a trap for the Helianos family, and even in suicide the German strives to do them in. That some German officers (or all of them) run true to this formula, does not make it any the less a formula. And if Wescott is careful to include enough variables to make even his Nazis seem human, he is still writing by equation. The moral on the right hand side of the equation is: never trust a German, and this time lick 'em for keeps. Helianos declares as much in a letter from prison, in which he also urges his cousin Petros, active in the underground, to go to America and deliver this message, presumably at War Bond rallies. One can understand an American author's having difficulty with Greek and German character, and resorting to formula to solve his problem. But his complete lack of cultural curiosity prepares the way for his uncritical acceptance of Allied war

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aims—a symptom of the current merger of art and officialdom.

Frederic Prokosch's *Age of Thunder* is pure pot-boiler, and if it's not exactly ham that's in the pot, it's "*coq-au-vin* and the wonderful omelettes," as befits the French setting. Secret agent Jean-Nicolas Martin, on orders from London, goes from the Haute-Savoie to Switzerland to check up on the underground and uncover leaks in secret information. He travels over mountains and rivers, through forests of pine and lush eroticism, with a properly queer and poetical assortment of companions —including a Negro, Quivar, designed to end, once and for all, race prejudice in America—who discuss food and philosophy and get lost or shot up on the way. Martin en route meets the Italian girl whom he will have on both sides of the Swiss border, a Macedonian, an Arab and an Annamite, thrown in for cosmopolitanism, and the Gestapo, who let him off scot-free. Somewhere in the course of his adventures, which the reviewers in the *Times* (New York and London) assure us are the very stuff of myth and fable, Martin accomplishes his mission, the leaks are plugged like so much plumbing, and Hollywood has another movie for the asking, provided the war does not end too soon.

These three novels have a curious trait in common: in all of them, the Germans, precisely at that level where they are held to be most lacking, come off well ahead of our side as rational, or rationalizing men who pretend to know what they are about. Glenway Wescott's Captain Kalter gives an account of German war aims that is, as far as ideology goes, the clearest thing in the book. Prokosch's *Oberbefehlshaber* tells us what he is fighting for with an eloquence that Churchill has never thought necessary to devote to the same purpose, and the position of Captain Ritter in *The Power House* is also made clear, plausible and attractive. Furthermore, in all three novels the heroes are cast upon and obtain the mercy of the Germans. Captain Ritter arrests Vernier for sabotage and releases him; Prokosch's Nazi sees Jean-Nicolas to the door and bids him a sentimental farewell, and Glenway Wescott has a German major intervene to protect the Helianos family from Kalter's posthumous malevolence. A fourth novel, *The Hideout* by Egon Hostovsky, even goes to the length of presenting the Nazi as a beloved school chum. I cannot account for this attribution of rationality and mercy to the Germans, so much at variance with our writers' apparent purposes. It may be that as the war becomes "less and less ideological" for us, it becomes more ideological for the Germans; in which case our novelists are applying Churchill's principle to their characterizations. But this would not account for the *Barmherzigkeit* inconsistently attributed to the Nazis. Perhaps men of weak political convictions cannot help feeling a desire to participate in certainties—even of Nazism.

Although not a war book, *The End of All Men,* by C. F. Ramuz, embodies a theme that may have been suggested by the war. The earth's orbit shrinks, the planet draws nearer the sun and all life withers away.

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Ramuz's failure to provide the essentials of narrative and characterization (if such a theme can bear novelistic development) leaves his story at the level of a tour-de-force. He dissipates his opportunities for poetry in a purple flood, but nevertheless achieves some remarkably vivid descriptions of human suffering.

A book which is not about the war and at the same time not "escapist" enjoys real distinction these days. First novels by writers who are not war correspondents frequently fall into this category. *The Ghostly Lover* by Elizabeth Hardwick is such a novel, an apparently autobiographical or self-oriented story in which the author is free from external political or moral pressures, but suffers the cramp of the narrow range. Miss Hardwick takes her heroine, Marian Coleman, through girlhood and young womanhood, describing her life with her brother and grandmother in a southern town, her shiftless adolescent parents, her education in New York and her escape from the oblivion of early and ill-advised marriage to which her brother has succumbed. First novels are the hardest: one is under constraint to say something new, but obsessive early experience, not yet lived down, insists on fidelity, and early experience is usually the same old thing: sex, parents, love, adjustment, etc. Miss Hardwick's success in balancing her story between her own demands and the demands she is trying to meet as a novelist is moderate. Her skill at characterization is, however, considerable.

Cannery Row, I should imagine, is the most successful of current escapist novels, and certainly the least pretentious. It is quite a problem, incidentally, to explain how novels of this type—sentimental, sugary, tending toward the level of the pulps—can possess charm and delight. Steinbeck tells an old story, one which he, together with Saroyan, O. Henry, the movies, the folk-lore of capitalism, etc., have been telling for a long time. All successful men have ulcerated stomachs. Money ain't everything—fact is, it's nothin'. The only *real* successes are the guys who enjoy life—the ones who live in boilers, in shacks and shanties, who booze and whittle and lie around in the sun: Mack and the boys, and Doc, good old Doc who runs the marine laboratory, plays Gregorian chants on the gramophone and recites poetry translated from the Sanskrit—to say nothing of good old Dora who runs the local brothel and her good old girls, and good old Lee Chong the grocer, and good old everybody and the dog. This sort of thing, rather than Prokosch's cosmetic journalism, is "the very stuff of myth and fable." It is, in fact, the Great American Fairy Tale, the bedtime story with which the materialist puts to sleep the suspicions of his heart. The sad thing is not that Steinbeck believes in it, for he is in his own way one of the boys, but that he should find it so easy to confuse literary success with the other American varieties and admit that it, too, amounts to nothin'.

ISAAC ROSENFELD

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY CONTINUED

WARS I HAVE SEEN. *By Gertrude Stein. Random House.* $2.50.

IT IS a great deal of trouble learning how to be a genius and teaching Hemingway and Picasso how to be a genius particularly for thirty or forty years if it is going to turn out that one is a charming writer, a genius can be a charming writer but not vulgar not at all vulgar and not middleclass, Gertrude Stein is not vulgar she is charming. There are two kinds of precocious children, one is nice and the other well they both listen they listen to the grownups and they sometimes draw caricatures but the one that is nice draws nice caricatures, nice children are not ambitious no not at all ambitious to be grown up they are ambitious to be told they are nice and very ambitious to be told that they draw portraits. Braque and Matisse and some other people didn't like the portraits that Gertrude Stein wrote even though they were very nice and so they called her a literary whore but she is not a whore. To be a whore you have to take something from somebody and you have to give something even if it is an imitation give and take, there has to be some give and take to be a grownup whore. To be a precocious child a nice precocious child or even a saint you do not need to give and take you only need to listen and you do not need feelings, some feelings are not nice, ambition is a feeling and ambition is not not oh nasty not nice.

If you are a nice precocious child and also the youngest in the family naturally you have privileges the privilege of being petted the privilege of being youngest, there you are you are privileged and nobody can do anything but take care of you, nobody for the rest of your life. You listen to word-feelings and feeling-words you listen to words and they sound like feelings, not many feelings are nice most feelings are no no not feelings. Words are nice reading eating things are nice, feeling-words are nicest. There are many words for saying there are words for not saying there are many words for not saying, there are many many words for not saying many many many words.

What Gertrude Stein likes most about this war more than other wars. This war killed the nineteenth century, Hitler killed the nineteenth century which Gertrude Stein was always also helping to kill. To be in the last war you believed in evolution it was still the nineteenth century you believed in progress, but to be in this war you only need a point of view. And there are so many points of view oh dear there are so many points of view in one person. There is Petain and there is Bernard Fay he is very nice and there are soldiers collaborators people, people say the Mayor is a collaborator but is he oh dear me, and there is food. Food is important more important food is the most important thing than money, money was the nineteenth century and now we have the twentieth century.

There is also Whitehead.

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Whitehead has a style and so has Gertrude Stein and Whitehead is a philosopher and so is Gertrude Stein but not a very good philosopher what did they talk about I wonder, what did they talk about while Alice Toklas entertained the wives of other geniuses, Mrs. Whitehead and the wives of many other geniuses. Well of course there is such a thing as the wisdom of a child but you can get too much of it and then there is childish wisdom and you can get a great deal of that, also superstitions intuitions feelings history Shakespeare, oh dear me there is always Shakespeare and he is always right.

> It is full of excitement to know that Shakespeare and everybody is right about how people are. By this I mean, anybody can mean, that when you are in a country that is being occupied . . . everybody is funny, that is they feel and they act in such different ways at any time. You think they think one thing and they act another. . . . Others who are said to be one thing say other things . . . . oh it is all so complicated and every day and in every way I like the complications being so complicated. The 1914 war was a simple war with simple feelings and all the veterans of that war are confused with this war . . . I must say I like it, I like things that look as if they were there when they are elsewhere.

Naturally if you are the youngest in the family and not quarrelsome, naturally if you are the youngest you are very well taken care of by everybody, "also as being the youngest I had cajoling ways, one has when one continues to be the youngest."

> When I was then I liked revolutions I liked to eat I liked to eat I liked to cry not in real life but in books in real life there was nothing much to cry about but in books oh dear me, it was wonderful there was so much to cry about and then there was evolution.

And now there is no evolution and no revolution and no food either, there is quite a lot to cry about but Gertrude Stein never liked the nineteenth century in real life so now we have the twentieth century and realism, realism is dead and things are really the way they look and not the way they are, a star is the way it looks and it is not really not the way anybody says it really is. So now we have the twentieth century.

Bennet Cerf who naturally doesn't like it much either says this book is an on-the-spot story of what the common people of France endured from 1940 to 1944 but is it. I think if you are interested in the way it looked the way anybody endured or realism realism, the way anybody says it really was, you had better not read Gertrude Stein telling you the way she felt, she is not very reliable about feeling and anyway she was not looking but listening. You had better read somebody who wasn't there at all such as Alex Comfort, he is more reliable about looking and feeling and that is the only way anybody can tell you how it really was. But Gertrude Stein is a philosopher she has a wonderful eye for the relationships of sound in words words and sometimes things and she is charming, charming and not very vulgar, her sentences are wonderfully preserved. No one can read her sentences without learning something anything no one can read her sentences without learning.

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They asked me if I did not find Americans changed. I said no what could they change to, just to become more American. . . . But all the same yes that is what they have changed to, they have become more American all American, and the G.I. Joes show it and know it, God bless them.

MARJORIE FARBER

NIGHTMARE AND FLIGHT

THE DEVIL'S SHARE. *By Denis de Rougemont. Translated from the French by Haakon Chevalier. Pantheon Books.* $2.50.

AMONG RECENT publications, I know of very few that come so close to the experiences of modern man. Whoever wants to catch a glimpse of the post-war, post-fascism state of mind of Europe's intellectuals should not miss reading *The Devil's Share*—carefully, patiently and (meaning no offense) with charity. The shortcomings of author and book are obvious, glaring to an irritating degree. They confuse the reader as they have confused the author. But the point is that this confusion is the direct result of experiences to which the author bears witness and from which he does not try to escape. Such experience as well as confusion will be common to all who survive and refuse to return to the deceptive security of those "keys to history" that pretended to explain everything, all trends and tendencies, and that actually could not reveal any single real event. Rougemont is speaking of the "nightmare of reality" before which our intellectual weapons have failed so miserably; and if he is confused, it is because in a desperate attempt not to be confronted with this nightmare in spiritual nakedness, he picks up from the great and beautiful arsenal of time-honored figures and images anything that seems to correspond or to interpret the new shocks that rock the old foundations.

The reality is that "the Nazis are men like ourselves"; the nightmare is that they have shown, have proven beyond doubt what man is capable of. In other words, the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of post-war intellectual life in Europe—as death became the fundamental problem after the last war. Rougemont knows that ascribing all evils and evil as such to any social order or to society as such is "a flight from reality." But instead of facing the music of man's genuine capacity for evil and analysing the nature of man, he in turn ventures into a flight from reality and writes on the nature of the Devil, thereby, despite all dialectics, evading the responsibility of man for his deeds.

The flight from reality, incidentally, is not a flight to theology, as the title and repeated quotations from the Bible suggest. It is a flight into literature, and occasionally very bad literature. There are not only little parables in which the author imitates Nietzsche at his worst—like "Woman beats man"—or essays on modern human behavior which

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imitate Chesterton on a much less brilliant level. There are such phrases as, "I like to write only dangerous books" which in their puerile vanity make it hard for the reader to take the whole thing seriously.

More serious than immaturity (Rougemont belongs to the generation which, raised between two wars, never had sufficient opportunity to mature and has something of a birthright to immaturity) is the basic confusion of the whole approach. This consists of identifying man's capacity for evil and the problem of evil as such with the "evils of our time" loosely and generally speaking. This leads to the introduction of the Devil in person who serves simply as common denominator. Although his existence is proved with a nice trick of Chestertonian logic ("Those who stick to old wives' tales—'I can't believe in a gent with red horns and a long tail'—are those who refuse to believe in the Devil because of the image they form of him which is drawn from old wives' tales"), he is nothing but a personification of Heidegger's Nothingness that already through its "begetting nothingness" was something of an acting subject. (The Devil is the "messenger of Nothingness," "serves Nothing," is "the agent of Nothingness," "tends to Nothingness," etc.)

This, of course, would be simply an attempt to explain the new experiences with the categories of the nineteen-twenties. But Rougemont does not stop there; his "flight from reality" is more complicated and more interesting to watch. Much against his will and though fearing and predicting "modern gnosticism," he falls into the worst pitfalls of gnostic speculation. His ultimate consolation is his confidence that in an eternal fight between God and the Devil, the good and the evil forces, victory is already won "from the point of view of eternity," that "our misdeeds and those of the Devil change nothing in the Order of this world" and that, consequently, "what concerns us in this century is to make ourselves immediate participants in this victory." This can but lead to the conclusion that all we have to do is "sanctify ourselves" for the purpose of joining the right, the eternally winning side. It is precisely this metaphysical opportunism, this escape from reality into a cosmic fight in which man has only to join the forces of light to be saved from the forces of darkness, this confidence that the order of the world cannot be changed no matter what man does—which makes gnosticism so attractive to modern speculation and may promote it to the place of the most dangerous and wide-spread 'heresy' of tomorrow.

When all this has been said, one has the duty of recommending the book anew. Whether one likes it or not, it is a true *document humain*. Whether one agrees with Denis de Rougemont or not, he belongs to those who, in his own words, "are all in the sinking ship, and at the same time . . . are all in the ship that has launched the torpedo." Those who know this, who do not want to get away from this not very comfortable position, are not numerous, and they are the only ones who matter.

HANNAH ARENDT

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DECLINE OF A TRADITION

AN ESSAY ON MAN. *By Ernst Cassirer. Yale University Press.* $3.

ERNST CASSIRER is one of the foremost living thinkers and expatriates. Formerly a professor at Hamburg and Berlin, he has recently taught at Oxford and Gothenburg and in 1940 he was invited to Yale. He is now at Columbia. This book, "the first impulse for the writing of which came from my English and American friends who repeatedly and urgently asked me to publish an English translation of my *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,*" is a condensed and somewhat modified version of that voluminous earlier work. Its comparative brevity is one of its virtues and a mark of austerity. Its thesis is that "spontaneity and productivity are the very center of all human activities . . . man's highest power. . . . In language, in religion, in art, in science man can do no more than to build up his own universe—a symbolic universe that enables him to understand and interpret, to articulate and organize, to synthesize and universalize his human experience." The substance of the book documents and illustrates this thesis. The key concept is that of symbol, and Cassirer makes the familiar distinction between sign and symbol as corresponding to and defining the difference between animal and human: the meaning of a sign lies in some physical or existential relation whereas a symbol is a purely semantic entity. In this respect the book recalls Susanne Langer's recent *Philosophy in a New Key,* and employs the same sort of material from animal psychology and ethnology.

The derivation of Cassirer's thought is, of course, Kantian. But it is obviously a secularized or left-wing brand of Kantianism. It is a unilateral Kantianism, retaining only Kant's methodological side—or rather his methodological emphasis, for Cassirer eschews the term *a priori* and one gathers it is a much less determinate thing for him than for Kant. Cassirer is Kantian mainly in his anti-empiricism, in his emphasis on the formative, constructive power of mind, although his inquiry is strongly empirical. His affinity with pragmatism is therefore unmistakable—the sense, for example, in which thought and language "objectify" experience is very much the same for him as for Dewey and C. I. Lewis—and he implicitly supports Peirce's contention that the ancestry of pragmatism is Kantian.

In a philosophy of this sort the metaphysical problem is avoided rather than solved. At any rate it is never stated, and in effect denied. The metaphysical problem is the problem of integrating our knowledge of scientific method, or of conceptualization in general, with our scientific knowledge of the world. Relativism and positivism are semi-adequate solutions because they require a radical revision, or inanition, of our scientific concepts, of the concept of reality and its subjective equivalent, belief. Indeed the great tendency and motif, extending even to physical science, of our intellectual life at the moment is the attempt to find a

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satisfactory conceptual or symbolic substitute for dogma (belief being, after all, by definition dogmatic). This euhemeristic tendency is a redeeming feature of our iconoclasm, and a partial antidote against its ill effects, but it will inevitably fail, for the simple reason that one cannot have one's cake and eat it. The profound cultural discord and disorder of our time have resulted not merely in a neurotic failure of conceptual power but in an attenuated relation between mind and the reality of which mind is a function. It is, in some measure at least, a metaphysical condition, as Eliot, Auden and others have seen, and perhaps one of its incurable symptoms is our habitual identification of the metaphysical with the neurotic.

Cassirer, at any rate, derives his importance from the fact that he has an immense gift for this sort of euhemerism—or, if you prefer, epistemology. His work bears other insignia of decadence. The product of a great tradition, it deviates from that tradition sufficiently and in such a way as to suggest its exhaustion—the depletion, perhaps, of a major type of philosophic discourse. In passages like this, for example, Cassirer is abstract without being specific in a way that his exemplars very rarely were:

> Philosophy cannot give up its search for a fundamental unity in this ideal world. But it does not confound this unity with simplicity. It does not overlook the tensions and frictions, the strong contrasts and deep conflicts between the various powers of man. These cannot be reduced to a common denominator. They tend in different directions and obey different principles. But this multiplicity and disparateness does not denote discord or disharmony. All these functions complete and complement one another. . . . The dissonant is in harmony with itself; the contraries are not mutually exclusive, but interdependent: "harmony in contrariety, as in the case of the bow and the lyre."

MARTIN LEBOWITZ

THE SAINTLY FAILING

MEN AND SAINTS. *By Charles Péguy. Translated by Anne and Julian Green. Pantheon.* $2.75.

IN SOME simple and profound remarks on the Scene of Supplication in Greek poetry, Péguy shows that it is the suppliant not the supplicated who dominates the scene, has the grand words, utters the bold threats. This is because the supplicated tyrant is isolated in his egotistical success and happiness; he does not represent anything; he is marked by Fatality. But the suppliant represents and draws on deep strength; this is because he has been handled, kneaded, manipulated by the superhuman fingers of the gods. And this, I think, was the picture that Péguy had of himself: a suppliant defeated by modern society—he said repeatedly that he was defeated—but also as representing a deep and formidable truth.

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The truth, the defeated truth, that Péguy represented had two parts, the mystique of the French Revolution and the mystique of Christianity, the schoolmaster and the priest of the 19th century genre comedies. As for Michelet, the Revolution was for Péguy not merely a social program but a religion, a martyrdom of fraternity. In this volume as in the previous *Basic Verities* he pities those who cynically scoff at the cut-and-dried elections and do not understand that martyrs died for this freedom. And by Christianity he always meant not only a religion but a social program of decent laborious poverty, the continuity of the peasant on his soil, etc. These truths which he represented he admitted had been defeated, but with them also he, in gentle simple terms, threatened the century.

Now in general it is correct for a poet and a man of letters, a man of learning and sensibility, to advance precisely by espousing the old values that have been defeated and are being forgotten. So Homer and Shakespeare did. And as Eliot once pointed out, such men as Matthew Arnold fought not to win but to keep the issues alive for us still to fight.

But with regard to the modern defeat, there is a distinction that Péguy himself drew and that makes his passive and non-revolutionary espousal of the old values quite disastrous and even, it must be said, treasonable to his brothers and to the truths he represented. For, said Péguy, we have not merely been defeated, we have been drubbed. History has never seen anything comparable. In the dissolution and degradation of ancient societies and ideals, there were, in the very crimes and vices, great resources: "This putrefaction was full of seeds." But before *us* we have—"the promise of sterility." "The French Revolution is literally annihilated under the blows, under the weight of universal barbarism. Not only nothing remains of it, but no traces of anything, no traces of promises even, nor of any fruitfulness to come."

Was it not shameful, then, for him nevertheless to advocate continuing the old laborious Christian labor in a system and under circumstances where that labor, whatever the subjective motive for it, was in fact solidifying the "weight of universal barbarism"; and climactically, to agree to fight as a Frenchman in the first World War—even though there was no trace of a promise of anything fruitful to come? Yet it was not necessary for Péguy to urge some other way of life than the old ways he approved of (e.g. he was not a Marxist revolutionary); on the contrary! just to urge the old ways intransigeantly, with full consciousness, and under pure conditions: thus, to try to live laboriously and simply but refuse to be mechanically exploited; to defend one's home but not in "their" army; etc. "*Il faut que France continue—France must go on,*" said Péguy, and explained that the continuation of France is the peasant struggling for his children; but it was treason to language to act as if this meant fighting for Clemenceau (or De Gaulle).

As to the half dozen long poems in this collection, including the

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primitivist "mysteries," there is here no space to analyze the pattern of elementary words and repetition of simple thoughts ever varying by which the poet achieves his characteristic effect of earnest urgency. But I feel I must question his manner of putting long speeches into the mouth of God the Father. Obviously Péguy would not venture to do so unless he were writing with full faith and without reservation. But this is not enough. It is necessary also, to dare so much, not to be consciously daring at all, but to be swept beyond oneself like the prophets. Let me give a crude example: Péguy has God praise the perfect piety of Saint Louis; but not only the reader knows, but the Dreyfusard poet himself knows, that Louis IX did many unjust and fanatical things; how does God the Father not know it? But if "God" is conceived as a character restricted for the purposes of the poem, then all seriousness is flung away and the poem is reduced to the artificial naiveté of *The Green Pastures*—certainly not Péguy's intention. But any mere poem, when the lips are not touched by a coal of fire, is written with the consciousness of a limited viewpoint; therefore, etc.

The translation of Anne and Julian Green is earnest and generally adequate; but rather persistently it softens and relaxes the French, a grave loss in a style at once so quiet and so urgent.

PAUL GOODMAN

NATURALISM TODAY

NATURALISM AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT. *Edited by Yervant H. Krikorian. Columbia University Press. $4.50.*

IT IS unnecessary, I suppose, to repeat the inevitable criticisms of any collection of essays on the score of selection, arrangement and difference in quality of the contributions—though the present volume seems particularly to invite these strictures. Readers interested in such criticisms may regard them as made.

The essays are of two types: those dealing with the nature of naturalism and its impact in the modern world, and those providing a naturalistic treatment of certain controversial subject matters. In the first category are papers by Dewey, Hook and Larrabee on the social import of naturalism and the opposition to it; Schneider, Dennes and Costello on concepts and categories of naturalism; and a very illuminating epilogue by Randall.

The Dewey-Hook social analysis of anti-naturalism appeared in this journal in the "failure of nerve" series. In the present context their position is given added substance by Larrabee's historical survey of American naturalism, which is shown to be rooted in concern with the solution of concrete social and technological problems, solutions provided only by the scientific enterprise. The effects of anti-naturalism are reactionary, as Dewey and Hook insist, both in directing attention away

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from genuinely problematic areas of experience, and in putting emphasis on procedures which not only can not deal successfully with these problems but even actively interfere with those which can.

The difference between the actual effects and *logical* consequences of anti-naturalism deserves more attention and emphasis than it has been given in this whole discussion. It is perfectly possible, as a matter of psychological and social fact, to support democracy on the basis of religious or metaphysical conviction. The point is that these convictions are themselves in error regardless of the political position which they are used to bolster; and that this bolstering, whether of democracy or fascism, is equally without justification. It is not always made perfectly clear and sufficiently emphatic that the proper objection to non-naturalism is not that from non-naturalistic premises reactionary conclusions are usually drawn. The objection is rather that the premises are false and that the conclusions in any case do not follow from them.

Clarity on this point is itself politically important. It leads to a recognition of the political futility of much ideological debate: the demonstration or refutation of a logical connection between a philosophical premise and a political conclusion is far less important than the naturalistic analysis of how and why the two positions are *in fact* used to support one another. (The social and psychological import of the presence or absence of logical connection must itself be analysed). And even more serious, to confuse in any way social effect with logical consequence is to court the dangers of attacking non-political doctrines when they are given objectionable political implementation, rather than attacking this implementation itself. Naturalism is not to be accepted because fascists have not found it congenial; nor non-naturalism rejected because they have.

The other essays in the first group differentiate, though not very precisely, between naturalism and materialism, and emphasize the naturalists' opposition to the reductionism which analyses various elements of experience as "nothing but" something else, usually of lesser value or lacking altogether in human import. In several places such reductionism is ascribed, by implication, to logical positivism—but without much justification: Carnap's technical concept of 'reduction,' for instance, was developed precisely to avoid the "nothing but" equivalences.

The essential characteristic of naturalism, as several of the papers make clear, is its principle of "continuity of analysis"—that all ranges of experience are susceptible to the same type of inquiry. (This is loosely referred to in several of the papers as the "experimental method," a designation which ignores the fact that in many sciences, for example astronomy, experiment plays a very minor role.) The naturalist rejects dualism not so much in an existential as in a cognitive sense: there are no special ways of "knowing" appropriate to special domains of experience. The second set of essays (though not grouped as such in the

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volume) are illustrations of this thesis, indicating the lines of a naturalistic treatment of several disciplines: religion (Lamprecht), ethics (Edel), esthetics (Vivas), history of philosophy (Boas), history (Strong), sociology of knowledge (Lavine), logic (Nagel) and psychology (Krikorian).

The papers by Nagel and Vivas were particularly clear and suggestive. But on the whole, the attempt made in this book to assimilate, as Randall puts it in his epilogue, "the genuine values of the personalistic and theistic philosophies to its own scientific thought and temper" is not as impressive as might be wished. This is not, I think, to be ascribed to the particular contributions, nor yet to any fundamental weaknesses in the naturalistic outlook. It is a consequence of the predominantly *programmatic* character of present-day naturalism, whether of the positivist, empiricist or pragmatist variety.

Contemporary philosophy, Randall suggests, is properly to be regarded as "post-modern." "Our generation has seen the passing of the problem that has dominated the whole of 'modern philosophy'—the conflict of the moral and religious tradition with newer scientific concepts and techniques. . . . Today we are at last in possession of a science that insists on the importance and reality of all man's experience and enterprises, and has developed concepts that promise to render them all intelligible. In consequence we are now able to erect for ourselves philosophies that can find a natural and intelligible place for all human interests and aims, and can embrace in one natural world, amenable to a single intellectual method, all the realities to which human experience points."

The present volume is an elaboration of this thesis. But to assert, or even prove, that such philosophies can be erected is not to erect them. The important issues are no longer between naturalism and non-naturalism, but within naturalism. The major problem confronting the philosophical enterprise today is not so much to refute non-naturalism as to explicate, with concreteness and precision, the content of naturalism itself.

ABRAHAM KAPLAN

A VERSION OF BAUDELAIRE

BAUDELAIRE. *By Joseph D. Bennett. Princeton University Press. $2.00.*
BAUDELAIRE ET SA MERE. *By Albert Feuillerat. Variétés, Montreal.*

JOSEPH BENNETT'S book is another bad book on Baudelaire. However it is worthy of comment since it illustrates so well the shift in our judgments on Baudelaire and since it is illuminating by very virtue of its faults. Moreover there are so few extensive studies of this great poet that even a bad study should not be ignored.

Bennett appears to be a pupil of a school of criticism rather than an independent, and as a pupil he displays the shortcomings of his school

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more than its abilities. His moral approach is religious; his aesthetic leans on the idea of paradox as applied to the now fashionable 17th century English poets.

For his religious interpretation he draws on the life as well as the poetry of Baudelaire. Now it is possible to understand this life as a fall from pride, a purgation and conversion. But this conversion (if it occurred) was coincident with the onset of hemiplegia and might be diagnosed by a physician as well as by a priest. Secondly the conversion is placed in 1862 when the work of Baudelaire, with the possible exception of two sonnets, was completed. Hence it may be doubted that this questionable phenomenon has any relevance to literary criticism. Actually if you wish to view the life of Baudelaire in its religious aspect you must find it a tragedy since in his case there is no effective emergence from the dark night of the soul.

When Bennett comes to the poetry we find: "The opening poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal* broaches the central religious paradox: the question of the joint existence of good and evil; the problem of sin." By a liberal use of the figures of irony and paradox this can be found. But the result is not particularly valuable. The critic is not keeping his eye on the poem. The questions this opening poem, *Au Lecteur,* does broach are the existence of evil, our willingness to sin and the pleasures we take in remorse. The good in man is not mentioned.

To understand the achievement of Baudelaire one must be aware of the work of Freud. By this I do not mean that the poems should be considered as illustrations of Freudian theories. Nor do I believe that a gloss of the poetry by psychoanalysis of the poet would lead us very far in the right direction. This was done by René Laforgue in *The Defeat of Baudelaire,* and the result was a stupid book.

What I do mean is that Baudelaire by his rigorous honesty in the examination of his own emotions and by his terrifying insight was able to give us truths about the heart which were rejected until Freud made them plausible. How shocked people were when Freud wrote that children have an active sexual life, that we hate those we love and wish to injure them, that we commit crimes to satisfy our craving for remorse. But how well Baudelaire knew all this, how clearly it is set down in *Les Vocations, A Celle Qui Est Trop Gaie, Au Lecteur* and many others. This is not the only achievement of Baudelaire but it is an example of the knowledge a poet can reach long before the arrival of the psychologists.

To return to Bennett: his analysis of *Au Lecteur* is an example of interpolation of values instead of acceptance of those explicit in the poem. On the other hand his interesting analysis of the sonnet *Spleen* (*Pluviöse irrité*) is based on a misunderstanding of what the French words mean. In this case he translates the line, "Le beau valet de coeur et la dame de pique" by "The dandy valet of the heart and the lady of pique," instead

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of, The handsome knave of hearts and the queen of spades. In his comments he shifts the whole meaning and tone of the poem to the level of the secondary reference, the only one given in his translation, ignoring the playing cards, and considering the reasons Baudelaire might have had for introducing two surprise characters into his setting. Under this stress the poem does hold together and we find that the ambiguity in the line is not merely a highlight but works back into the rest of the poem. Thus, although Bennett misses the simplicity, he points an emphasis that the reader familiar with the playing card idiom might miss.

However, the reader who does not know French should be warned that the translations in this volume are often shoddy and sometimes grossly inaccurate, and that the inaccuracies rarely lead to happy interpretations. Even the French text, based on the poor Calmann Levy edition, is not free from errors.

A book of a completely different kind is Albert Feuillerat's *Baudelaire et Sa Mère*. This is a partial biography, a study of mother and son. But Baudelaire's complex emotions toward his mother, which often were far from affection, directed his life to an unusual degree, and to understand this relationship is practically to understand his whole life.

Baudelaire's letters to his mother are almost impossible reading, so painful are the miseries, spiritual as well as financial, displayed to gain sympathy; so revolting are the calculated brutalities of the son in his attempts to obtain money: another 1000 francs, another 100 francs, even another 10 francs. It is a sickening catalogue of rancors and humiliations, of prides and poverties.

Feuillerat uses these letters, as well as letters from the mother, as his principal source-books. The portrait he draws from these sources is not as repugnant as that I derived from Baudelaire's letters alone, and is doubtless much more authentic than that given in the fictionalized *Vie Douloureuse* by Porché. In Feuillerat we find the scheming, neurotic man, but we also find intimations of the integrity that made possible the *Fleurs du Mal*.

Since *Baudelaire et Sa Mère* is in French this is perhaps not the place for a lengthy review. However it is too good a book, and too good a corrective to all the nonsense current about the life of Baudelaire, to let pass without notice.

GEORGE ANTHONY

RETURN OF THE PURITANS

PURITANISM AND DEMOCRACY. *By Ralph Barton Perry. The Vanguard Press.* $5.00.

SIX HUNDRED labored pages leave me unconvinced that we should "take puritanism and democracy as symbols of piety . . . to maintain our moral identity and the stream of national life." Perhaps I remain

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among the unregenerate because I fail even to perceive the existence of the problem that troubles Mr. Perry, who seeks a reaffirmation of the "American Tradition" to put an end to the "doubt and disillusionment" of the past three decades. I can't forget that earnest men complained about "declension" before the end of the Seventeenth Century. Fisher Ames, Hawthorne, and all the Adamses testify that doubt and disillusionment were always essential ingredients of American thought. And I simply cannot grasp a conception of "Americanism" that rests on the notion that "a social group constitutes a nation insofar as its members are of one mind."

Quest for a tradition makes trouble for Mr. Perry too. He must hold, for instance, that the two "historic creeds" with which he deals were not irreconcilable, in fact, that puritanism was "predisposed" to democracy. Here he parts company with most scholars who cannot fit together the puritan doctrines of man's depravity, of a predestined body of the elect, and of the literal acceptance of the Bible, with the democratic "trust in human faculties . . . and the confident belief that the world disclosed to these facuties was harmonious and beneficent." In this book, reconciliation comes through redefinition. Puritanism here is "the moral necessity of subordinating all partial good to total good"; democracy, the "creed of equality and natural rights . . . embodied in the Declaration of Independence." In the light of these definitions, it becomes possible to use the terms Puritan, Calvinist, Protestant, and Christian almost interchangeably, and to denominate the authors of the constitution democrats, an epithet that would have horrified almost all of them.

I will not question the right of a philosopher to make what definitions he likes. For him, it seems, "it is more important that an idea should be an idea, and that it should be true or false, than that anybody should ever have believed it." The rub comes from the attempt to maintain that these are historic creeds, for then the behavior of real people must be measured in the light of these ideas. By Mr. Perry's standards, John Marshall and the Federalists who upheld natural rights against the rule of the majority were democrats, Andrew Jackson was not. And John Cotton becomes a bedfellow of Roger Williams and even of William Penn. Mr. Perry is often critical of " 'rigorous' historians." It is not hard to see why.

OSCAR HANDLIN

THE BURDEN OF REFORMISM

REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE. *By J. Donald Kingsley. The Antioch Press.* $3.50.

KINGSLEY attempts an explanation of the nature of modern democratic bureaucracy. He uses the two techniques of historical description and functional analysis, the book being divided accordingly into two

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main sections. The approach is Social Democratic; it is characterized best by Kingsley's statement acknowledging Harold J. Laski as his chief mentor: "He brought me understanding and a point of view which has ever since formed the focus of my thinking." So he employs a class analysis—but of a kind. The British Foreign Office, for instance, is criticized for its "mistakes" of the thirties; but these "mistakes," he says, followed from its conservative, class composition. But this sort of thing is the eternal burden which the reformist mind must bear.

The historical pattern the author presents is one of aristocratic predominance in the machinery of government being replaced by actual bourgeois control. The reforms of the 19th Century "altered the relation of wealth to rank." Royal patronage gave way to appointments by examination, but examinations based on expensive classical education. While the one class gradually encroached on the other's position in the bureaucracy, consolidating its political control, the class structure of the Service remained intact. The British bureaucracy, like so many other things British, exhibits a tendency to create form by the slow accretion of precedent. At first sprawling and shapeless, the Service became centralized more and more under the control of the Treasury, until now this control is autocratic and deadening.

Criticizing the structure of the bureaucracy, Kingsley makes many notations pointing toward an effective rationalization. His criticisms, in fact, are too constructive. The reasons for this are illumined, I think, by the fact that he confuses the growth of bureaucracy—which he alternately calls the advent of the "service state"—with socialization. (Engels long ago pointed out the absurdity of viewing the Post Office as a socialist institution.) One of the errors attendant on seeing the introduction of socialism as a gradual process, continuous with the capitalist order, consists in the necessity of discovering "roots" of socialism in the existing capitalist society or state. Unilinear, not dialectical roots. It is especially an error to describe elements of a capitalist *state* as "socialist."

The main thesis of the book is "that administrative arrangements always reflect the character of the social structure of a nation." In this sense, Kingsley believes, bureaucracies are representative. In other words, they represent the ruling class; and, secondarily, mirror the relation of class forces. Since Kingsley thinks the war marks "the eclipse of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class," he can look forward to a postwar period characterized by "centralized economies under state control"—these require huge bureaucracies—not only without apprehension, but with the belief that the period and the bureacracies both will be democratic. Burnham, at least, was pessimistic. The British Labour Party is waging capitalist England's war, which the ruling class nearly lost through its own ineptness. Will that destroy the ruling class?

DAVID T. BAZELON

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Correspondence

Art, Neurosis and Society

Sirs:

I should like to rescue a point from Lionel Trilling's "Note on Art and Neurosis" in the last PARTISAN REVIEW that I believe to be important. To state his position briefly: " . . . the neurotic elements of the scientist, banker, lawyer or surgeon are of the same frequency and the same kind as the writer's"; the fiction of the artist as uniquely neurotic is a philistine conception peculiar to the nineteenth century.

(1) Trilling seems to fall into the historical fallacy which holds that explaining an attitude is the same as explaining it away. Supposing him correct in his assumption that the bourgeoisie, aided by the artist's revelation of his innermost processes, propagated the notion of the latter's neuroticism, we have still to consider other neglected factors, notably what the neuroticism essentially was.

(2) Even in his historical explanation, Trilling overlooks a central factor: "The eighteenth century did not find the poet to be less whole than other men and certainly the Renaissance did not." Trilling here posits a static abstraction labeled "Poet" who was merely reacted to, and never reacted in turn, altering his outlook and personality. But it was precisely the artist's alienation from society, abetted by events peculiar to the nineteenth century, which fostered the neurosis, continuing into our day. While the scientist, banker, lawyer, and surgeon were also affected, they found a place in society which the artist did not.

(3) Finally, it is noteworthy that Trilling has chosen Thomas Mann, than whom, no one in our time has better shown the inner workings of the artist's neurosis, to uphold his own contrary view: "That the artist's neurosis can be but a mask is suggested by Thomas Mann's pleasure in representing his untried youth as 'sick' but his successful maturity as militarily robust and efficient." This about the author who has found for himself the formula, "Chronist und Erläuterer der Décadence, Liebhaber des Pathologischen und des Todes, ein Asthet mit der Tendenz zum Abgrund," the creator of Castorp, Tonio Kröger, and Gustave von Aschenbach!

WILLIAM ELTON
Ohio State University

Paris Weekend

Sirs:

I thought you might like to hear about a weekend in Paris 1945. Last Saturday I was trying to get into a show of Oscar Dominguez's latest paintings when I came across a little man who informed me that the place was locked. There wasn't enough light. In certain sections of the city the electricity is turned off until 5 p.m. The little man asked me if I was a painter. I said no but I knew what I liked. He suggested that I step across the street to see the Soutine retrospective exhibition. This had been my plan anyway. He accompanied me there and we found it too was closed, for the same reason. So we went to another gallery where he was supposed to be in half an hour or so, being an art and book critic on *Gavroche*, a weekly which has been going for some time since the occupation. On the way we introduced ourselves as men of letters. He was interested to hear that I had translated some Gide, and he interrogated me intensely on American literature today . . . who are the best novelists, who are the greatest influences, etc.

He was especially eager to know how the surrealists are taken at home, and I told him I had heard André Breton's lecture on surrealism at Yale in 1943. This was not true: I missed the lecture; but I didn't want to disappoint my interrogator. I did know, however, that some of Breton's listeners, notably

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the elderly ladies who appear from the remoter corners of New Haven to attend such public lectures, had been shocked by his lyrical and detailed description of his wife's breasts, and my new friend was delighted to hear this. He kept chuckling about it and asking me to give more specific data . . . how did they show their disapproval? did they hiss, blush, hide their faces? I invented answers to all these questions and they all pleased him.

At the Select Bar on the Champs-Elysées he showed me a few items he had written for last week's *Gavroche* and affirmed that he would make my story about Breton's lecture into an 'echo' of the same type. Thus is journalism created . . . 'a usually unreliable source.' Over the beer we became good friends. It turned out that he too had been a university instructor . . . in philosophy. He is writing a study of William Blake and has completed a thesis on Gérard de Nerval. . . .

We then went to the Café de Flore, where my friend, X, was to meet a Chinese painter and his girl friend, a Rumanian interpreter. We were joined by a young French surrealist painter, Y. At dinner at a restaurant nearby Y told me some of his experiences in the resistance movement. In Marseilles, where he had gone with André Breton and some others who subsequently left the country from there, he and about 50 others rented a large house which they turned into a cooperative confection factory. Each man worked four hours a day making fruit bars like the ones we get in K rations, and the products were sold at prices good enough to support the whole group. Nowadays the 'fruit-bar boys' recognize each other by a gesture as of kneading crushed dates. We discussed the disillusion and reaction that have set in now that the underground movement is above ground. Y said that there is still much rottenness in France and did not seem to have much hope that it would be eradicated, which I found a welcome contrast with the starry-eyed attitudes so often struck in the press about the 'resurrection of France.' After dinner we had some hot rum at another cafe and then went to the painter's studio to look at his work. It is rather like posters . . . phallic advertising, one might say . . . but he has some very nice 'psycho-analytical' illustrations for 'Alice in Wonderland.' The Rumanian girl was upset by Y's pictures, but I was pleased to find he collects apple cores. Also to hear from X that Jean-Paul Sartre used to collect the pieces of paper he found in the street.

The truck that was supposed to take me to the front next morning didn't, so I had to stay in town all day Sunday. Overcoming my disappointment with a slight effort, I wandered into the Red Cross' "Rainbow Corner" and saw a notice saying that Braque would show me (well 'you' generally) his pictures that morning if I liked. I thought this a fine idea, and in a few minutes a young lady called Suzanne something turned up and carried me and another sergeant off to Montparnasse by Métro, talking agreeably all the way. These Sunday mornings *chéz les peintres* are becoming an institution among G.I.'s stationed in Paris. I gathered that Suzanne had started the whole thing by taking an American friend on a visit to Picasso. Someone found out about this and slowly more and more people did and eventually Picasso's studio was thronged with autograph-seekers and curiosity-hounds. Things came to a head when about sixty of them congregated there and sang "Happy Birthday" for him. Happy birthday, dear Pablo! It was too much, and soon afterwards he requested the Red Cross to stop sending our emissaries. He wanted to work. As for Braque, he had not been deluged, and was extremely pleasant to the dozen or so visitors he had that morning. His house and studio are a superb exhibition. He is trying out new greens and yellows, painting sunflowers almost a la van Gogh . . . only much more soberly and, to my taste, far better . . . and still lifes enriched with velvety browns and purples. He is also doing things that are rather like cameos . . . white-line designs on black plaster. Many of

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them are like Greek vase designs. When I mentioned this to him he said he had been illustrating a new translation of Hesiod's *Theogony* and many of the objects were originally conceived with these illustrations in mind. But one cannot make premature remarks about 'the mellowness of old age,' 'back to the Greeks at last.' The largest painting I saw there was an extremely bold, almost heady thing . . . a table with the surrounding objects in a perspective so distorted that each object in the picture seems to be seen from a different angle . . . above, below, level. I know this has been done before . . . but never, to my knowledge, so dramatically and with such drastic simplicity, so alarming a delight.

I was of course unable to resist the tempation to 'interview' Braque while I had the chance, and I asked him a number of questions, including a most impudent one: what did he think of Picasso's latest period? As you know, Picasso's Salon d'Automne show consisted mostly of "monsters," women with two faces and such, which had to be guarded by two policemen after the famous manifestation by some unknown and still uncaught Picasso-haters, whom Picasso suspects to have been collaborating painters who were annoyed with him for not collaborating. Braque gave me the evasive answers the question deserved: he thought Picasso conceived his new style as 'a sort of magic,' and that he (Braque) thinks it a 'perilous venture.'

As to the occupation, Braque said that he was approached . . . indirectly, of course, by several Germans who condemned 'cultural bolshevism' out of one side of their mouths and offered him good prices on the other, but did not succeed in buying anything from him. "I worked very hard during those years," he said. "There was nothing else to do." The one departure he permitted himself from Paris was an expedition to his country place at Dieppe, which coincided with the Canadians' raid on that town. He said with something like satisfaction that he saw them kill a good number of Germans in his front yard. "For the Germans," he said, "war is a national industry. Their attack on culture is something utterly abnormal and it had to be swept away." He said that this not only as a Frenchman wounded in the last war but as an artist, and I liked the utterance, which is of course neither profound nor original. It went well, though, like Braque's straightforward Norman manner and virile speech and tall bright appearance, with his luminous house, filled with created things. . . . I found it difficult to leave the dining-room with its big bowl of Normandy apples and its Braque murals, and the living-room with its Braque-made wooden bowls and ashtrays and its Braques and a Picasso on the walls. To look at such an affirmation of life is to reaffirm one's own, and for hours after the visit I felt fortified and warmed. . . .

SGT. F. J. BROWN

Storm Over Burnham

Editorial Note.—We have received numerous comments on James Burnham's article, "Lenin's Heir," in the last issue of PR. The article is discussed elsewhere in this issue, and we regret that limitations of space permit us to print only short excerpts from some of the letters:

Lore Joseph (Madison, Wisconsin) writes from the point of view of orthodoxy: "Burnham has demolished us. The walls of Jericho have caved in. Trotskyism, blared down by the Wagnerian strains of Mr. Burnham's trumpet, lies prostrate, and the international proletariat . . . will now lie down and peacefully invite history to step all over it, while the Chorus of the Blessed chants hosannahs for multinational Bolshevism(!) and Stalin triumphantly sails away on the crest of a Wave of the Future!"

Dr. Leslie Adams (New York) maintains that Burnham's article is "the best piece of political writing which it has ever been your good luck to print. . . . And now, having gone so far as to publish something in the na-

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ture of permanent literature in your chosen field, the political-intellectual field, can you not draw the necessary conclusions from it in your future policies? Instead of hopelessly clinging to the infantilism, the cheat, the nothingness of leftism . . . why can't you become simple and clear even in the measure of your ignorance? . . . "

Zack Edward (Brooklyn) insists that Burnham "defies refutation. What is one to do with an argument that states 'Stalin has openly flouted every principle of communism—yet Stalin is communism'? It may be that Stalin's success is due to his departure from the forms of communist thought. If so, how can these forms be held responsible for their own inversion at Stalin's hands? . . . Burnham comes fairly close to advocating abandonment of conscious political principles as such and to a quasi-masochistic prostration (the while he protests) before the sheer vulgar might of anti-rational forces which are enjoying (at what a cost to Man!) what any hillbilly will recognize as "success."

"Lenin left no heir. . . . While he did not bequeath his leadership to Trotsky, the only putative will extant (unfortunately not admitted to probate) specifically disinherited Stalin. Let us not bemuse ourselves with the narrow question of transmission of the actuality of political power, which Lenin, in any case, did not possess during the last year of his life. Of far greater importance, he left a body of ideas . . . summing up a lifetime of political thinking and experience. This body of knowledge Lenin neither assigned nor bequeathed but left in trust, as it were, in perpetuity to whosoever could best make use of it for the betterment of society. . . . "

Henry M. Paechter (New York) sent a long communication, entitled "In Defense of Don Quixote," from which we quote a few paragraphs: "Being no Trotskyite or former Trotskyite, I feel that I am the right person to protest against Mr. Burnham's article. . . . Trotsky refused to admit that Stalin, by the fact of having occupied Lenin's place, is Lenin's heir. He called him mediocre because a man who is given a chance to liberate humanity and is satisfied with extending the frontiers of Russia, is, by all standards of Quixotic thinking, mediocre. He called him a traitor because a man who was assigned the duty of administering a Quixotic party and chose to usurp power for himself is a traitor.

"Whether Trotsky was right or wrong in his charges against the wisdom and efficiency of Stalin's policy is indifferent. He was right in applying the standard of judgment by which a man is great or mediocre according to the historical conception which he tries to realize. . . . Mr. Burnham now enjoins us to abandon these useful categories of mind. . . . In exchange he offers the categories of achievement and efficiency. We are to accept them on pain of ridicule. His criterion of efficiency is enormousness. History, he says, is made by gigantic criminals, and everything else is a literary squabble. . . .

"Mr. Burnham still professes to dislike the managers and Stalin. But he likes efficiency and admires efficient men. He believes in making "History," "greatness," "objective Law." Dostoevsky loved Christ and hated the Grand Inquisitor; hence he was able to expose victorious mediocrity. Burnham at his best has hate-love for his efficient managers. Hence his value-judgments are at variance with his historical appreciation, his categories are confused and his surrender to "realism" is disgusting."

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Variety

Report from the Academy:

The Professor as Manager

WHEN OUR impatience with the academicians becomes heated beyond a certain degree, we ought to pause and remind ourselves that the professor is a primordial human type, that (as Pedagogue or Pedant) he harks back to the very dawn of comedy and satire, that, indeed, in his innermost essence, he certainly harks back farther than that—back to the dimmest early millennia of our life as a species. We may be sure that, in every sense but the literal one, there were professors in the Palæolithic (Paul Radin has practically proved it), and that, let us say in the Magdalenian, the parietal artists who painted the great bison and reindeer were regarded by the professors of that era with the familiar mingling of envy, suspicion and dislike: these latter certainly looked upon the painters in question as "unsound" and "erratic" fellows, however "brilliant."

All this is true, but it is also true that the type Professor has its accidents as well as its essence, and that, like the other great permanent genera, the pedant has bedecked himself, from age to age, from scene to scene, with the garments of his climate, his class, his "moment." The American academic type that emerged in the period between the two wars, and is now everywhere ascendant and authoritative, is still at heart our ancient ally, the Pedagogue, but *on the surface* one doubts whether Horace or Rabelais or even Flaubert would quite recognize him. He belongs to an age when, whatever one may feel about the phrase, something like a Managerial Revolution has quietly taken place, and he trims his clothes to the cut prescribed by that fateful process. Hollywood, so far as I know, has not yet discovered the professor as Salesman, as Manager, as Executive, but that is due only to the familiar "lag" in the mentality of the studios: the movies will catch up with reality in due season.

There once were professors of something like the Hollywood brand, and the fact is that the American scholar has passed through as many phases as the social history of the country itself. The earliest schoolmen, in the colonies, were either ministers or men who had all the outward earmarks of the ministerial type. At a later stage, in the days of Ezra Stiles and John Witherspoon, the scholar was very likely to turn *philosophe,* pamphleteer, and patriot, to sign petitions and to introduce resolutions. During most of the nineteenth century he assumed the stigmata either of the mercantile gentry (Silliman, Longfellow, J. D. Dana) or of the plantation plutocracy (Maury and LeConte). We even had, during the age of Grant, our robber barons of scholarship:

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the paleontologists Cope and Marsh, for example, locked horns together, on a field strewn with *ossements fossiles,* quite in the manner of the great industrial Cervidae of the period—Gould or Frick or Harriman. But the older type was tough too, and generally speaking it preserved its status and held its lines well into our own era: it yielded, or has all but yielded now, only before the brisk onrush of the new type, the type begotten (under Harding and Coolidge) by the New Capitalism and brought to perfection (under Roosevelt) by the later forms of Free Enterprise. The representative scholar of our decade is—not a Cabot or a Livingston—but an Eric Johnston in cap and gown.

None of the definitive characters are missing: the veneration of quantity, the lust of the tangible, the mental ingenuousness, the passion for organizational machinery, the instinct for the immediate and the solidly visible, and (to put it negatively) the contempt for ideas, the hatred of literature and the arts, the fear of criticism, and (singular as it sounds) the distrust of learning itself. Philistinism, obscurantism, anti-intellectualism — these are as truly the stamps of the successful academician as of the successful entrepreneur. I remember giving voice, a good many years ago, in the presence of an eminent American historian, to what was probably some very callow criticism of a certain scholar as deficient in ideas. "Ideas!" exclaimed the eminent historian. "Ideas, indeed. There are far too many *ideas* on the loose in this country as it is." I had not thought, to tell the truth, that our intellectual life was quite so intense or quite so menacing as that; but this excellent teacher, whose own considerable reputation was based on at least one idea, spoke—as I later learned—for the growing majority of his colleagues.

We are all colleagues of his, however inconspicuous, and it behooves us to look into our own hearts as well as round about us while we speak. This sober thought ought not to silence or embarrass us, however. And I can perhaps most concretely illustrate these remarks by reference to certain developments in my own "field"—for of course I have one—the field, as sales-managers would say, or "territory," of American literature. About twenty-five years ago, it was discovered that this large and populous (if not always "exclusive") territory had gone, until then, virtually untapped: it was a market that had simply not been opened up, in any big way, and once this word had gone round, the prospectors poured in, first in a tiny trickle, then in a swelling stream, and at length in a wild current that threatened to become an inundation. "What a rich mine of thesis-subjects!" said one highly-trained woman scholar to me with a little natural envy—though her own field was a very lucrative one—and in fact she was quite right: the thesis-subjects have not yet been exhausted, though the very best pickings have by this time been pretty well combed over.

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It has all been a vivid and instructive lesson in the application of sound business methods to that inherently very unsound affair, the life of the mind. There has been little or no starry-eyed nonsense about it. The teachers of American literature in the colleges have organized a "group"—a subsidiary corporation—in one of the large holding-companies of the profession, the Modern Language Association, and this group itself they have proceeded to organize into highly efficient committees. At present these consist of an executive committee, a nominating committee, a "committee to assist the bibliographer," a "committee on resources for research," a "committee on a bibliography of printed materials for the study of American literature," a "committee on curricula in American civilization," and a "committee on revision of articles of organization." These committees are not yet known as CTATB, COCIAC, etc., but doubtless they soon will be. Meanwhile, day by day, they are reducing the element of risk in the intellectual life, eliminating the wasteful intangibles, and putting the whole enterprise of studying, understanding, and communicating our literary heritage on a firm fiduciary basis.

True learning in the old sense—in the sense of wide-ranging, curious, adventurous, and humane study—has gone into eclipse: you cannot be learned in that sense and manage your own office effectively at the same time. You must get results; and it is well known that you cannot get results quickly if you dissipate your activities in a thousand directions. You must "specialize," and know more than anyone else could hope—or indeed wish—to know about Milton or Melville D. Landon.

"Put all your eggs in one basket," as Andrew Carnegie said, "and then watch that basket." This astute maxim has been given application by most of the contributors to a series of text-books—intended, ostensibly, for the use of immature students—published by the American Book Company and known as the American Writers Series. The interested outsider might do well to dip into some of these portentous volumes. A few of them—those devoted to Melville, to Hawthorne, to Whitman—are excellent; but the majority are little more than dismal monuments to unlearned specialization, bibliographical diligence, and ponderous insensitiveness to the real needs of the youthful mind. They bristle with "selected bibliographies," "chronological tables," and somber "introductions" — introductions which discuss "So-and-so's Literary Theory," So-and-so's Economic Views," "So-and-so's Political Idealism," "So-and-so's 'Place'," etc., and which abound in footnote references to special studies, "primary sources," and *soi-disant* learned articles. Of the illumination of genuine learning there is nothing—or precious little. Fancy —and suppress, if you can, a shudder—what a thorough course of sprouts in such a series would do

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to the latent literary curiosity of many a student.

I say "student"—but I am well aware how tactless and unsound this allusion of mine is. In our own circles we allude to the student as little as possible, and then only in embarrassed parentheses. Where, in fact, *is* the student in this great garishly-lighted suite of executive offices, so beautifully equipped with the shiny filing-cabinets of research and investigation, and so imposingly sonorous with the clattering typewriter-keys of "publication," with the buzzing telephone-bells of committee-work?

The student is not one of the officers of the concern, after all; he is not one of the employees, either, skilled or unskilled, white-collar or mechanical; he is not one of our competitors or one of our associates. He really has no status in the office at all—for the student, of course, is that little-regarded figure, the consumer. We are all familiar with the attitude which the captains of free enterprise have always taken toward *him*. One sometimes wonders whether his plight will ever be much happier than it is until he organizes a consumers' union of his own, and sets seriously to work fingering, eyeing, sniffing, and generally testing the sleazy goods that are mainly palmed off on him. If that time ever comes, one suspects that the knell of the managerial professor will have struck. Meanwhile, he is enjoying a bull market.

NEWTON ARVIN

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The Wrath to Come

WITH THE exception of a few weeks of bombing in London, I have experienced only the backwash of war. I have existed in curious backwaters. My four years of service comprise two and a half years as a battery surveyor in the R. A. (Field), six months as a clerk ditto and a year in the Pay Corps. I have also been a patient in a psychiatric hospital (after two and a half years at the same job it seems I began to behave rather oddly) and loitered for short periods at the R. A. Depot and an Army Selection Center. I never went further than N. Ireland, where I did my first 16 months. The only period I spent technically in action was a glorious summer on beach defence in the S. E., during which I completed a quasi-autobiographical novel called *Saturnine*. A sense of unreality has in fact pervaded the whole course of my military career, and this is no doubt responsible for a general lowering of nervous tone which has accompanied my descent by easy stages from the medical category A1 to the medical category C2. I do not feel that I have helped in any considerable degree to win the war, but on the other hand neither have I done the nation a palpable harm.

I have had a number of unfortunate encounters and fell at various times a prey to self-pity and resentment, sudden rages and fits of the giggles, abysmal cynicism, tremors and flashes, faintness, teetotalism, sexual repression, pimples under the collar, earache and *anorexia nervosa* or loss of appetite. It is all a little difficult to summarise.

What have I learnt? I have learnt enough ballistics to fill an article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and enough survey to keep me henceforward from being puzzled by the behaviour of men with theodolites. I could make an accurate map. I also know more than I did about English towns, the English countryside and Englishmen. I know Ulster and know that it contains two good poets and two good novelists, but I saw no signs of a literary renaissance either there or anywhere else.

The novelty of mixing with the working classes was spoilt for me by the fact that it was no novelty. I was brought up with miners and textile workers, and my grandmother took in washing. I am bilingual and could so live inconspicuously with the midlanders who formed the majority of my comrades. I found between myself and them a remarkable unanimity of feeling. It is true that they betrayed no exceptional longing for a proletarian literature, but then neither do I. The people with whom I have felt at variance were clerks and salesmen. In ones and twoes I have found that middle-class types made an excellent leaven so long as they were not eaten up with ambition, but in larger groups they invariably create what C. S. Lewis called "pockets of evil" and generate an atmosphere in which it is difficult to breathe. The officer corps undoubtedly suffers in quality from

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this peculiar latent vileness in clerks whose origin I imagine to lie in the unproductive and indeed unreal nature of their work and in the ambiguous position which they occupy in contemporary society.

Politically, however, I never have known where I stood for more than a few weeks at a time. I fancy I could be called an anti-Tory. I am also strongly opposed to all the forms of nationalism, the little, unsuccessful nationalisms as well as the big, successful ones. That is to say, to Welsh and Scots as well as German and English nationalism. I believe that one of the least important factors in man's life is heredity, and I like the man who makes no local temporal excuse for his activities. But I doubt whether I should still be a socialist if the Tories were out, and I am afraid I cannot even believe that the anarchists are serious.

Of one thing I am convinced, and that is the necessity for education and yet more education. There is a sense in which all modern war and the politics which lead to war are a direct result of democracy. In this sense, "democracy" means "popularisation." It is a sense in which Germany and Russia are as democratic as England or the United States in that they are not governed and controlled by any true or even traditional elite. Nor could they be. The day of a governing elite is past. What is required is that the people shall hurry and drink deep of the Pierian spring. At present, they have a little knowledge and abominably misuse it. Art has been given

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to them in the form of the cinema, the newspapers and broadcasting. Science has been given to them in the form of weapons and the internal combustion engine. Intoxicated by the one, they let fly with the other. By "the people" of course I do not simply mean "the humble." I mean cabinet ministers and manufacturers, preachers and demagogues, generals, comedians and all the rest of the ignorant, uninitiated mob who differ from their fellows only by the degree of their greed and the measure of their temporary success.

In modern war, the people have consented to take the place of inanimate forces. Inundation and drought destroyed Babylon and Egypt. The bubonic plague devastated Europe from the sixth to the eighteenth century. These terrors have been largely removed from us, and in their place it is human beings who rise up and obliterate each other. That is to say, themselves. The modern plagues are inorganic. Men rain down upon each other mineral bodies. Natural respect for the individual has gone. Against the overwhelming pressure of the impersonal and the inorganic, respect for the individual must be restored if necessary by artificial means. That is the process of modern education. It is the chief responsibility of poets, artists and intellectuals.

I do not wish to indulge in speculations about the future until this present incubus is off. Nor have I seen anybody about the place who looked to me in the least like a prophet. Let prophecy rest. I have seen a great many who died before the war but are still walking about like zombies, and I have met a few of those who are unquestionably capable of survival. I should like to be one of these. I should like to be capable of receiving the full shock of the future as it shakes itself loose and becomes the present. I know that I shall be largely occupied with my private and domestic life as it is at present. It is closely defined, and enough is contained in it to keep me from whoring after strange gods for a long while to come. I feel that these five years have made little fundamental difference to me, to my attitudes, to my ways of looking at things and feeling about them and sorting them out. But they have brought me a spate of rather turgid new experience with which I shall presently have to deal.

My general philosophy I would describe as a modified fatalism. I believe that men are overwhelmingly conditioned by circumstance and by certain laws of succession and recurrence in their lives. I find that I was writing, two months before the war:

It is folly to wish that a thing
may not take place,
Before the dissolution of this
earth
Every possibility will have been
made actual,
And that which is must be.

This is still my belief. I am told that it was argued at length by a Jesuit called Campanella in a book called *The City of Gold.* But I also believe that at certain exceptional moments a man may be so posi-

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tioned that he can now for once perform a free act before the operations of fate close in upon him yet again. It is for these exceptional moments that a man lives, though it is conceivable that he may never see even one such moment in his own life.

These free acts are not André Gide's *acte gratuit*. Gratuitousness is not freedom. Gide's *acte gratuit* presupposes that all decisions may be freely made and that one may at any moment choose to perform an act without recognised motive. "Gratuitous" in this sense is merely "eccentric," and *actes gratuits* may be as powerfully conditioned as the most rigid conformity.

The possibility of freedom depends upon a scrupulous observance of necessity. (Spinoza said this.) I must become extremely sensitive to the operations of natural and "supernatural" law in order that I may be in a position to strike home quickly with my free act when the vulnerable moment occurs.

There is a good and evil. Evil is any form of clotting or stoppage. Blood must flow.* Money must flow. Love must flow. Hoarded money, spilt and clotted blood, possessive or introverted love, closely systematised thought, venerable institutions . . . these are the forms of evil. They express them-

* This expression is commonly used in a contrary sense.

Blood is commonly held to "flow" when it runs out and presently clots. Blood properly flows only in the veins and arteries of a living body.

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selves in a man's body as constipation and in his mind as the fixed, repetitive patterns of hysteria. Their expression in the arts displays a great complexity. From the closed ranks of a school to the copyright style of an individualist, the deliberate blocking of creative impulse takes many forms. Academic traditionalism, art for art's sake, catch-penny novelty and aggressive romanticism are all repetitive and hysterical.

It is dangerous for an artist to take his ar too seriously. A poet should a' ays be willing to surrender his poetry like Rimbaud and Humil's. The paradox is that a willingness to be sterile or to lie fallow frequently prevents a man from becoming sterile or lying fallow for so long that he turns sour and reverts to death.

The war has made me see life as something rather less conclusive than I had thought. I now find it less difficult to listen with patience to the oriental theories of reincarnation. I find that I have less sense of urgency. Far larger hunks of life are Kafkaesque than I had thought. I am inclined to think now that Kafka was a greater realist than Zola. The imitators of Kafka employ his discoveries as an elegant literary flourish. They forget that Kafka learned to see the world like this by a life of appalling drudgery and no elegance.

Of the writing that has been done and published during the war, it seems to me that the best was done by older writers. I have seen nothing by a young poet to put against the war-time volumes of T. S. Eliot, Cecil Day Lewis and Edith Sitwell. I have liked what I have seen of Laurie Lee's because it was gay. Alex Comfort I judge from his work to be extremely gifted but puffed up with ambition.

In prose fiction, matters are much as they were. The new luminaries are, I suppose, Philip Toynbee and Henry Green, William Sansom and J. Maclaren-Ross. I fear for Toynbee that he may prefer to be a *New Statesman* smart Alick consorting with X. Y., Z.—and other boudoir lilies. I fear for Sansom that he may lose himself in the contemplation of his own exquisite phraseology (the deliberate, wrong-headed imitation of Kafka will pass). I do not think that I have any particular fears for Green or Maclaren-Ross. France has a Green, and we have three, and they are all pretty good. F. L. Green is good too. Koestler's war-time record is excellent. We have had the most ambitious Hemingway and the two Eudora Welty collections from America. Evelyn Waugh's tin gods marched into Valhalla in a cloud of talcum powder. Two years ago, a short novel called *Morgan Bible* made me wonder for a moment whether our finest living novelist were perhaps not Elizabeth Bowen, not Graham Greene, not Rosamund Lehmann, but . . . Caradoc Evans? This improbable tragi-farce is the one book during the war which excited me by its mere language. I do not remember prose of an equal splendour since Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*. Caradoc Evans died recently. A complete reading of his work is one of the treats

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I have promised myself for the end of the war.

But this is not a prize-giving, and writers cannot be placed in a league table. Do I see any profound, dialectical change in the direction of all writing? I do not. I see a great deal of frustration, and I see that war-time conditions in the publishing trade have created a free stamping-ground for several kinds of amateur. The amateur is an excellent weathercock. If he writes verse, then it is clearly time for the professional to devote himself to prose. And indeed I think that this is a prose age. There is too much in need of careful analysis. There are times when poetry is insufficiently explicit.

For certainly the war has clarified my attitude towards the forms one of writing. Or do I mean not "clarified" but "hardened"? At any rate, I no longer feel that the mere fact of writing verse possesses a special merit. On the contrary, I am inclined to think that the use of metrical forms calls for an explanation. It is natural for men to express themselves in prose, whatever the theme and whatever the approach. Otherwise, the writer of a love-letter would commonly display a tendency to break spontaneously into verse. If a man writes in verse, there has to be a special reason for it. The traditional prestige of verse forms is insufficient reason. Every time I read a poem now, even if it is a poem which I have already begun to admire, I want to know, "Could this not have been done effectively

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in prose?" If the answer seems to be "Yes," I consider the poem to be unjustified. I want to know exactly what has been gained.

A good deal of what I have seen since the war could not have been done effectively in any medium. A good deal of contemporary verse is masked exhibitionism. I mean that the poet's first impulse was to exhibit symptoms of his internal discomfort and that his second impulse was to mask these at once with obscure statement and with a prestige-laden form. In prose, he would have been compelled to be reasonably explicit and might have rendered a clinical service to his neighbours. Many poems seem to stand out about half an inch from the poet's skin like painfully extruded ectoplasm.

If there is to be poetry . . . but no, I have refused to prophesy. A girl-child of four with whom I am on excellent terms and for the normality of whose upbringing I can vouch has produced within a fortnight the following pieces of imaginative utterance. First, a song called "Jesus and his Wife" which she sings to her dolls and of which I have been unable to catch the other words. Second, on seeing a soldier with a bandaged foot in the village high street, the observation: "All those poor soldiers hurting each other. I expect what they really want is to climb back into their mothers' tummies." Third, a remarkable drawing of four suns which she named as the father sun, the baby sun, the mother sun and the go-to-school sun. The child had begun school two days before she did the drawing, and she has a brother two months old. The mother sun is flattened and suggests a stretch of earth, partly by its position. Thus in a fortnight a child of four has taken up the prophetic burden of humanity from Blake, Freud and Lawrence. I can add nothing to this.

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL

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Courtesy Nierendorf Gallery, New York

LEOPOLD MENDEZ: Engraving on wood. Illustration for *Incidentes Melodicos del Mundo Irracional.*

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